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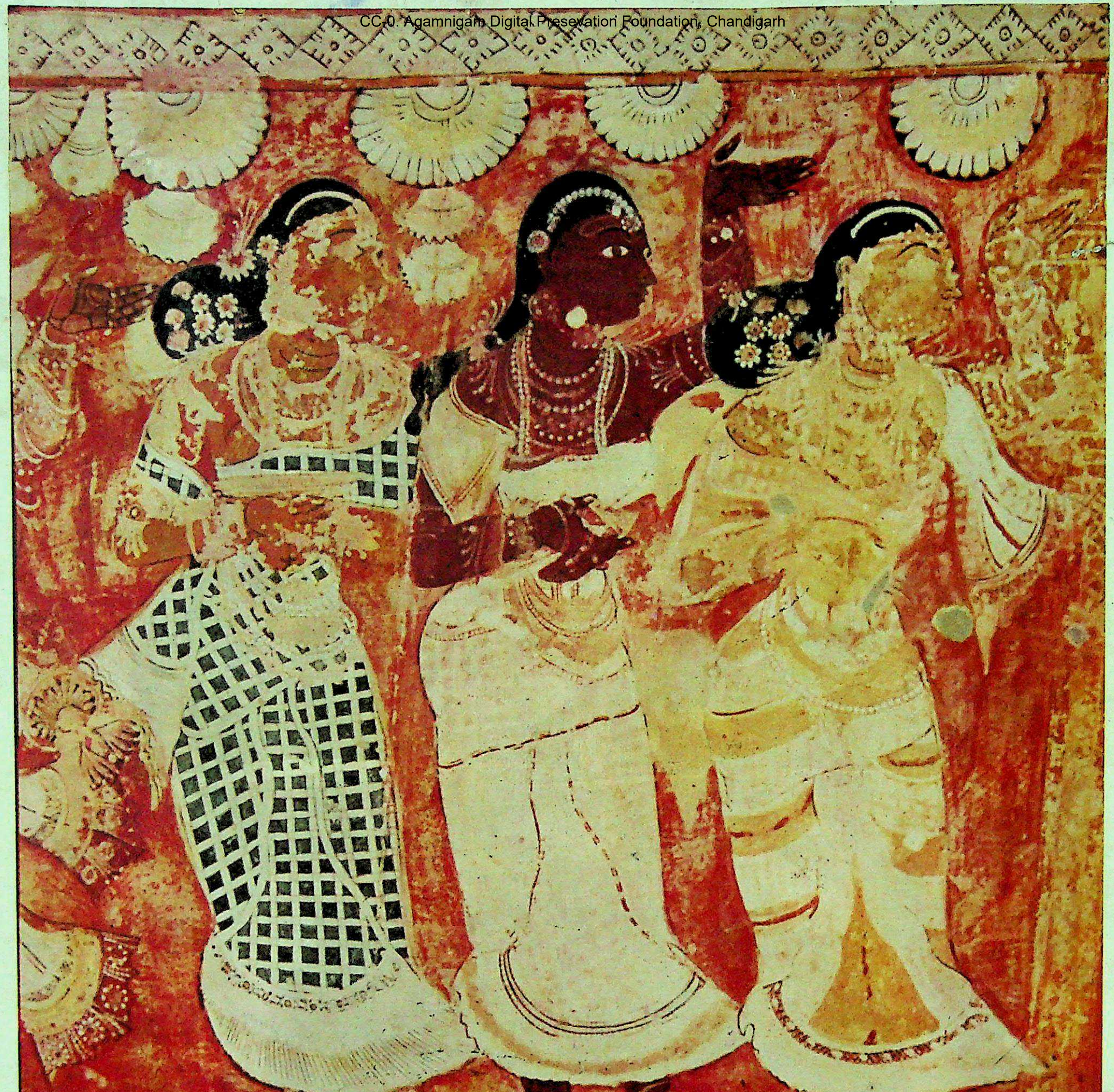

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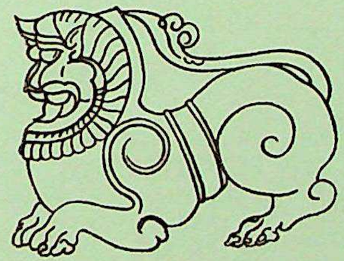

Text by

AMANCHARLA GOPALA RAO

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published by	L. N. GUPTA, Honorary Secretary, for Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi Kala Bhavan, Hyderabad.	
1969		
Colour photographs:	Plate Nos. I to VIII	Bal Krishan
Black & White photographs:	Plate Nos. IX, X, XX to XXIII, XXV to XXXI, XXXIII to XXXV, and XXXVII to LIII	Bal Krishan
Black & White photographs:	Plate Nos. XI to XVII, XXIV, XXVIII, XXXVI and LIV to LVI	Ravikant
Drawings by:	K. Seshagiri Rao V. Srinivasa Sarma	
Engravings by:	Commercial Art Engravers (Pvt.) Ltd., Bombay.	
Printed by:	Arun K. Mehta, at Vakil & Sons Private Ltd., Narandas Building, Sprott Road, 18 Ballard Estate, Bombay 1, India.	

PREFACE

To the Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi the publication of this volume is the fulfilment of a long cherished desire to introduce the Art and Architecture of Lepakshi to the art loving public. The temple at Lepakshi constitutes a rich heritage of Andhras and with its fine architecture, bold sculptures and exquisitely beautiful paintings is a source of inspiration to the artist, of considerable importance to the historian and has a lasting appeal to the lover of art. So far no publication befitting its importance has been brought out. No doubt scholars like Sri C. Sivaramamurti and lovers of Andhra culture like Sri Kalluri Subba Rao have done pioneering work to draw public attention to this unique monument which can rank perhaps next only to Ajanta as the contribution of Andhras to art.

The temple of Lepakshi and its art are unique in many ways. They represent a glorious period of Andhra culture. The empire of Vijayanagar might rightly have the pretension to be the saviour of Indian culture when it was in danger. The temple of Lepakshi offers something different from the art and architecture elsewhere. Its departures were not challenges to old and cherished values of Indian culture but only the regional accents of a great general pattern.

The Akademi feels proud to bring forth this publication, a venture normally beyond the resources of a State Akademi. We hope it will be a significant addition to books on Indian art—more so, for the scholarly and painstaking study of the monumental contribution of Lepakshi by the late Amancharla Gopala Rao. The sudden demise of Sri Gopala Rao, on the eve of publication of this book, saddens us deeply on an otherwise happy occasion. I take this opportunity to pay homage to his memory. Above all, this work will constitute a fitting memorial to his scholarship. This work is intended for the uninitiated, as well as, the artist and the connoisseur, because the temple of Lepakshi contains a deviation and a restatement of old values with new vigour and strength. Previously, the reproductions of these sculptures and paintings were not collectively available, and the artist and the connoisseur came across them only at random. So, now they can evaluate them afresh by a glance at this book. We hope this will give a new stimulus to the artist and the connoisseur, as well as to the layman, to rediscover those values in the present-day context. It is indeed rare that we find Hindu paintings on walls but here at Lepakshi we find them in abundance.

The Central Lalit Kala Akademi has given a token grant for this publication which is gratefully acknowledged.

Lepakshi is situated 300 miles from Hyderabad city and 65 miles from Bangalore and is conveniently accessible by road and train from both these cities. It has the potential to become a centre of much tourist attraction apart from being a place of pilgrimage to the true lover of Indian art.

N. Narotham Reddy

FOREWORD

The Vijayanagara period is of supreme importance to know the continuity of traditions in art, literature and culture in South India. The Emperor Kṛishṇadévarāya so caught the imagination of people in his vast empire, that, like Aśoka with whom almost every stūpa is associated and the myth of 84,000 stūpās built by him created, almost every large-sized *gópura* in a temple in South India is called a *rāyala-gópura* and often associated with Kṛishṇadévarāya, who like Aśoka is believed to have built innumerable towering gateways to temples.

Kṛishṇadévarāya himself, it cannot be denied, was a great connoisseur of literature and art. That he himself composed in chaste Telugu the book *Āmuktamālyada,* glorifying the life of Āṇḍāl as a devout *Vishṇubhakta* that he was, and that he patronised in a singular manner, like an earlier royal poet Bhója of Dhārā, the greatest poet in his realm in Telugu, Alasāni Peddanna, and even bore the palanquin for him, to proclaim to the world that scholarship was even above royal birth, only shows the trends at the highest level in the Vijayanagara empire. Under such auspices, it is no wonder, art and literature flourished.

Some of the finest monuments of South India belong to the Vijayanagara period. The capital of the empire at Hampi, that aroused the admiration and an enthusiastic description in the superlative of the flourishing city on the banks of Tungabhadra, can well be imagined in its glory during its heyday, when the devastated city today, looking a desolate and straggling hotch-potch of ruins, still has so much of sculptural and architectural wealth, after six months of continuous devastation by the combined forces of five Sultanates of the Deccan, that came together for once in a joint effort to crush the supremacy of the Vijayanagara empire. The Hazārārāmasvāmi temple, the Virūpāksha temple itself, the Queen's bath, the plinth of the Audience Hall, the Lotus Mahal, the Queen's Palace, elephants' stables are all a dream of the past still alive and visually wonder-inspiring.

Among secular buildings, the Mahal or Palace at Chandragiri shaped like a temple *Vimāna* answering the description—*prasādo devabhūbhūjām* suggesting similarity of form to temple and royal palace is here obvious. Among fortresses the most lovely creation is at Vellūr which still looks as fresh as when it was occupied by Chinnabomma Nāyaka, the famous patron of the illustrious polymath Appayya Dīkshita. The Kalyāṇamaṇḍapa of the Jalakaṇṭhesvara temple at Vellūr is unsurpassed among the Vijayanagara monuments for sheer delicacy of carving and tasteful choice of decorative motifs and bold execution of the pillared hall.

The Portuguese travellers have left wonderful accounts of the achievements of the painter in the Vijayanagara court. That the painters were not only well-read in texts of *Śilpasāstrās* and iconography, but were attuned to nature around and studied the details of form and anatomy, to achieve the best in portraiture as well, is all clearly indicated in such magnificent portraits of the greatest Emperor of the period, Kṛishṇadévarāya himself, whose bronze statue along with his consorts Tirumalāmba and Chinnādevi, in the temple of Lord Vénkaṭésvara at Tirupati, and a similar portrait in stone, from one of the Gópura towers at Chidambaram, confirm the talent at its best in portraiture of the Vijayanagara craftsmen.

Viewed against this background, the portraits of the brothers Vīraṇṇa and Virūpaṇṇa at Lépākshī not only rouse our curiosity but satisfy our desire to know how the builders of the lovely temple of Lépākshī looked like. The temple at Lépākshī was built by the chieftains Vīraṇṇa and Virūpaṇṇa with special devotion to their tutelary deity Vīrabhadra, whose painting on the ceiling of the inner hall is probably the largest ever attempted as a mural in India, even exceeding the size of magnificent Tripurāntaka, the creation of Rājarāja's painter in the Rājarājeśvara temple at Tañjāvūr. *The Nāṭyamaṇḍapa* of the Lépākshī temple is indeed a fine one with sculptural work suggestive of the *Sandhyā-tāṇḍava* of Śiva with divine musicians in attendance around, each individually carved on a pillar with the dancing Lord as the principal figure.

The paintings in this *maṇḍapa* which include the story of Arjuna's exploits to win the Pāśupata weapon and the justice demanded by a cow from a king of the Chóḷa line who never denied justice to any, Vaṭapatraśāyi, Rāma's coronation, Draupadī's *Svayamvara* and other themes are no doubt very interesting, but even more interesting and probably more in the nature of narration is *Śivaparākrama* or the exploits of Śiva and his various iconographic forms like Kālāntaka, Bhikshāṭana, Chaṇḍeśānugraha, Tripurāntaka, Harihara, Kalyāṇasundara and so on. The Vijayanagara phase of iconography has also to be studied here in these paintings in relation to earlier Chóḷa mode of presentation of the same themes.

The delight of the Lépākshī sculptor in monumental work is observed not only in the Nāgaliṅga within the temple, but also in the huge bull somewhat away from the temple. The best tribute to his love for design is that the local goldsmiths of Lépākshī assiduously study the wealth of design from the pillars of the ruined *maṇḍapa* or pillared hall behind the main shrine within the courtyard of the temple.

These paintings were left neglected, and they remained unnoticed, and were even allowed to almost perish, though a casual notice of these is found in Lenghurst's note on Lépākshī in an Annual Report of the Southern Circle of the Archaeological Survey about fifty years ago. In 1935, my cousin Dewan Bahadur Vishvanatha Rao, then Collector of Anantapur District, was so struck by the charm of the paintings and the beauty of the temple carvings that he invited me to copy them. Thanks to the kindness of the Village Officer Venkatanaranappa, it was possible for me to copy and photograph some of these paintings and write a paper on them for the Vijayanagara Sexcentenary Volume, wherein the glory of Vijayanagara for six hundred years was narrated during the celebrations. Another paper was contributed by me to the Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, as Professor Stella Kramrisch, realising the importance of these paintings, invited me to write on them for the Journal.

For years the Andhras have rightly felt proud of this artistic wealth and Padmaśrī Kalluri Subba Rao was anxious to get an album of Lépākshī paintings published in a manner befitting Vijayanagara art. I am very happy that the Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi has thought of publishing a book on "Lépākshī". One cannot be sufficiently thankful to Sri N. Narotham Reddy, the President and Sri L. N. Gupta, I.A.S., the Honorary Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi for bringing out a publication on Andhra medieval art like this.

Sri Amancharla Gopala Rao, who has written the text, has given an introduction of Indian art, the South Indian temple, the history of the South Indian people and against the background of religion, legend and iconography he has discussed the temple at Lépākshī, its architecture, its sculptural wealth and the paintings. It is essential that a magnificent temple like this, with rich sculptural and pictorial wealth, should be properly studied and appreciated. Sri Gopala Rao should be congratulated for having contributed the study of Lépākshī in this beautifully illustrated handsome volume. The Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi has to be congratulated on this publication on a great phase of Andhra art.

C. Sivaramamurti,
Director, National Museum,
New Delhi.

New Delhi,
December 21, 1968.

INTRODUCTION

The temple of Lepakshi is a recent discovery but a very significant one. A monument of Vijayanagar art, it provides an important link in the chain of history of painting in south India. As the art of every period and clime, the art of Vijayanagar too presents points of weakness and strength at once. The weakness present in the architectural scheme of the temple can be attributed to the uncertainty and emotional tension of the times when it was erected. It was a critical period when the magnificent edifice of Vijayanagar empire was tottering and its dramatic fall was impending and imminent. The saying that the artist holds the future in his brush is well illustrated in this immortal edifice of Lepakshi. The architect, the sculptor and the painter have done their best to gather and unify all the existing tradition and values in this single monument. It was the spirit of the times when all Hindus wanted to get together for survival and a spectacular revival, fighting against converging forces of disruption and annihilation, that is reflected in this great unfinished monument.

So, it has become necessary in this monograph to include a few introductory chapters to make clear the milieu of the monument. For milieu includes not simply the environment, but both history and atavistic preparation, because of which the chapters on the evolution of Indian art, development of the South Indian temple, and history become not only relevant but very necessary. For nothing, not even a point, stands alone and free in this universe. Everything stands supported by history, environment and the many converging and radiating forces around. So the reader is advised to go through the brief introductory chapters with the same attention as he will give to those describing the temple itself.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Padmasri Kalluri Subba Rao who was greatly responsible for the discovery of this grand treasure house of Vijayanagar art and has, with great and persistent labour and effort, collected and compiled all the necessary material to study this great edifice and its art. But for his pioneering efforts this monograph would have been impossible.

My thanks are due to Sri N. Narotham Reddy, President, and Sri L. N. Gupta, I.A.S., Honorary Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Lalit Kala Akademi for encouraging me to write this monograph and providing me with all the necessary facilities to do it. I must thank Sri K. Seshagiri Rao for the assistance rendered by him to me for the study of this monument.

Amancharla Gopala Rao

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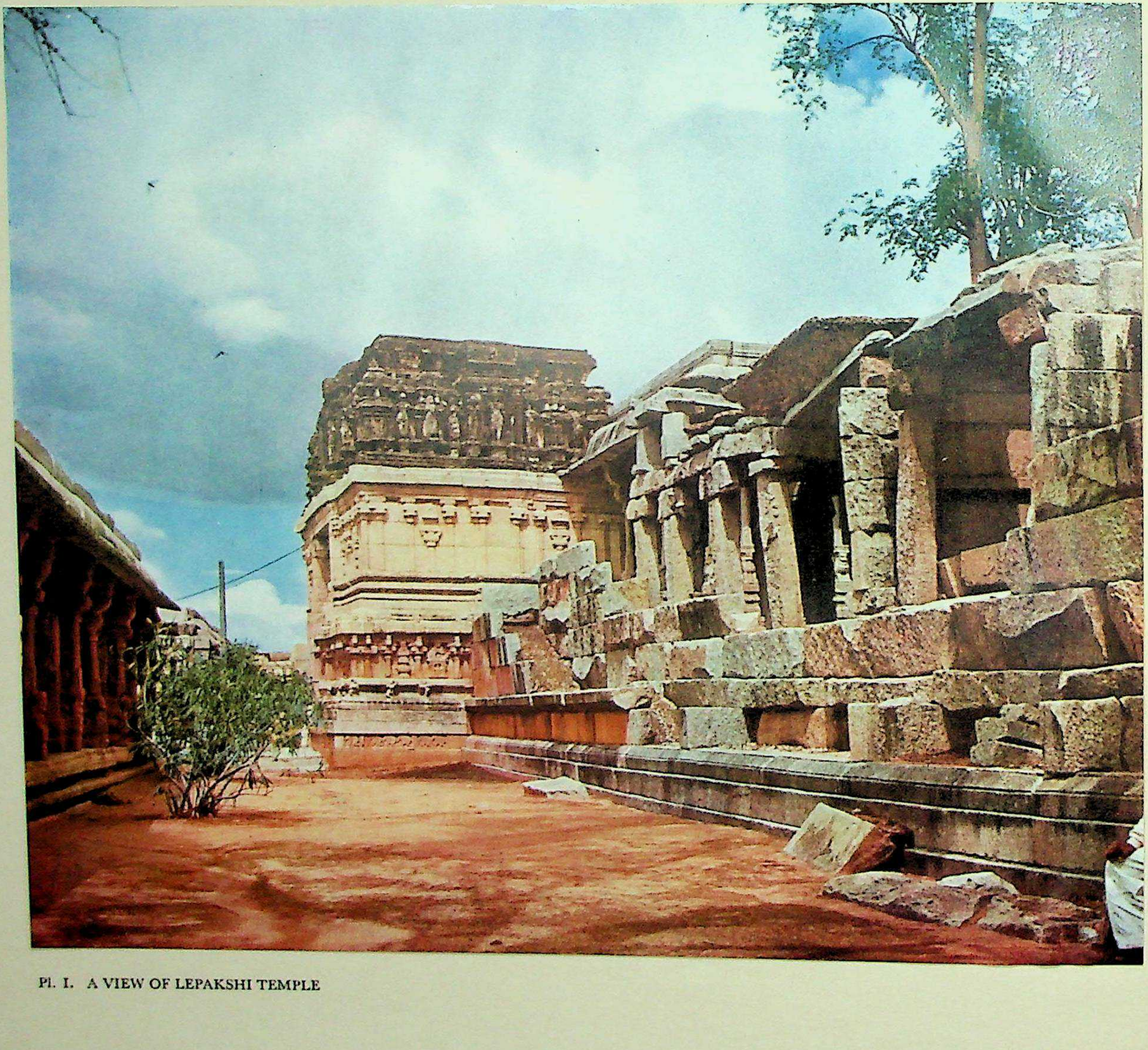
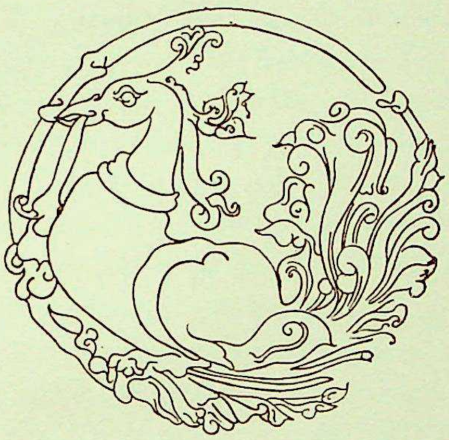


Pl. I. A VIEW OF LEPAKSHI TEMPLE

CHAPTER I

INDIAN ART



HAMSA

The beginnings of Indian art are unknown. Art in India attained a high degree of perfection even in the third millennium B.C. as evidenced by the discoveries of pre-historic civilization at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Even during that remote period, highly finished pieces of sculpture of pure form and proper proportions were executed. They all evince a thorough study of anatomy and a consummate knowledge of the fundamental principles of the structure of the human body. Along with the sculpture, the science of building had also advanced to a degree of perfection unknown in any other country during that period. Well planned buildings of multiple storeys were erected with burnt bricks and mortar. Those cities were cleared of superfluous water by a system of underground drainage, constructed with terracotta tubes, so perfect that they have almost a modern look.

The sculptures discovered at Mohenjodaro and Harappa evince no archaic quality even as the early sculptures of Greece of the seventh century B.C. On the other hand, they were obviously done by master craftsmen with the experience of some generations behind them. These ancient craftsmen sculptured both in stone and metal. The quality of these sculptures is of such a high degree that one of the early archaeologists was tempted to remark that they resembled classical Greek sculpture both in form and finish. Only the bulging stomach of one of them forced him to recognise and acknowledge the sculptures as purely Indian.

Afterwards, for almost twenty centuries, we do not come across pieces of sculpture or works of architecture in India. But several ancient texts do make mention of them. The *Rigveda* contains a lone reference to a golden statue of Indra and another reference to a painting of Rudra. Buddhist lore is full of accounts of cities, mansions and palaces decorated with well laid gardens and exteriors and interiors ornamented with sculptures and paintings. Later, epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* contain various descriptions of cities, palaces and forts. But sculpture and architecture make their first appearance in the history proper of India only during the Mauryan period, about the third century B.C. in the forms of statues, columns and *stupas*. During the same period a few caves were also excavated to provide Buddhist monks with resorts for the rainy season. The caves, though absolutely unadorned with any relief sculpture or painting, were of good architectural value.

Buddhism was widely spread and even became the court religion of the Mauryas but all the sculptures executed during the Mauryan period cannot be said to be Buddhist. A few sculptures of *yakshas* and *yakshinis* do survive, which could be Brahminical as well as Buddhist, for *yakshas* and *yakshinis* belonged to the folklore of India though they were absorbed later into Buddhism. But the Asokan pillars and *stupas* are entirely Buddhist.

All the examples of Mauryan art that exist today have a finish unparalleled in the history of Indian art of the later ages. This is because most of these sculptures and columns were executed under royal patronage by master sculptors. They have a characteristic polish known today as the Mauryan polish.

During the second century B.C. another dynasty, the dynasty of the Sungas came into power. This period was characterised by a strong revival of the Brahminical religion. Buddhism lost its royal patronage. During this period, sculptures of *Bharhut stupa* were executed. In these sculptures, it is evident that the Mauryan imperial art had given place to folk art. The sculptors of these reliefs on the *stupa*, came not from the royal palace, but directly from among the common folk. So their aim was neither to get the royal finish or polish nor to attain a classical touch in their forms. Impelled by an irrepressible urge, they were in a great hurry to erect a monument, permanent and eloquent and at the same time enlightening to the one object of their devotion. Those sculptors did not lack power or expression. They entered the rock and expressed all that they wished in the manner they wanted. The impact of *Bharhut stupa* sculptures on the senses and the mind of the spectator is not of a lesser force than the sculptures of any other period. The same spirit and intensity circulated through them. Perhaps, they can also be said to be primitives in the sense that they passionately pursued a single sentiment—their devotion to the Buddha and his message.

During this period, Buddhism was not the religion of the palace. Devotees from among the common folk came forward to express and give form to what they felt was very dear to them. This is evident from the sculptures at *Bharhut stupa*, direct and simple, yet powerfully expressive. Not so were the sculptures and the art of the Andhra period which closely followed. Once again Buddhism gained royal patronage. Satavahana emperors of Dhanakataka commissioned master sculptors and architects of the royal court to erect and decorate monuments in all the corners of their great empire. Trade guilds or individual merchants vied with one another to finance such projects either to curry royal favour or to gain popularity with the public or to secure a proper place for themselves in the celestial kingdom. Ananda, the *sthapati* or master architect, was commissioned from the royal court of Satavahanas to erect and decorate the gateway at Sanchi. Achavada Nagappiyya, a merchant, donated the necessary finances for the structure. The ivory workers of Videsa volunteered to sculpt and decorate the monument.

The sculpture at once became refined and attained a classical touch. The architecture gathered grace and dignity. It became completely functional and symbolical. Architecture and sculpture of this period evinced a mastery of those mediums unknown before. The well trained sculptors could illustrate and express everything. As Ferguson has said the bas reliefs of Amaravati *stupa* excel all work of this type and are the best for all time. The sculpture of this period with its elongated forms, sweeping movement and strong sensuality has a definite recognisable style, certainly a prerogative of the masters. These are rich in detail and decoration. Yet the eye sweeps over, taking in all the ensemble to gather a totality of impression. The detail and decoration has never become heavy to hamper the movement of the eye of the spectator. It forms into a part fundamentally adding to its movement and enriching it, never encumbering. Every form perceivable by the human eye found its way into the rich sculptures of this period. Yet, the sculpture or architecture never lacked the expression of deep devotion so essential to all art that expressed religion.

Even the paintings done during this period, as can be seen in the earliest, the ninth and tenth caves of Ajanta, share all these qualities with the sculpture of this period. Perhaps, it is not an exaggeration to say that painting and architecture in India were all conceived in terms of sculpture. Sculpture was the basic art. Architecture and painting were derived from it. So it is, that the paintings of Ajanta have almost the appearance of the coloured and flattened sculptures of the Amaravati *stupa*. This effect is also further enhanced by the fact that almost the same subjects and the same manner of treatment were chosen. Even many forms in similar poses and contours as those of Amaravati reappear as paintings on the walls of Ajanta.

Meanwhile, about the first century A.D. began a flow of art style from the northwest known as Gandhara art. It was Hellenistic in character. Greek style of expression followed in Central Asia and became model and fashion to the Indian sculptor of the north. He had not lost any time in discovering the Apollo ideal with which he dressed the rocks of Gandhara in profusion. Forms of the Buddha and the Bodhisattwa began to take shape in abundance; they invariably took the Apollonian form, except that they wore the mantle of the Indian monk, with the right shoulder exposed, the *ushnisa* (a protuberance of the cranium of the head, but expressed as a knot of hair on the top of the head in Gandhara art) and the *urna* (an elevated mole at the centre of the eye brows, mistaken by many Europeans as a cast mark) so essential to the forms of the Buddha or the Bodhisattwa. The canonical texts described the Buddha with superhuman qualities and defined signs on the body that would express them. The most important of them were the *ushnisa* and the *urna*. Even the Gandhara sculptors could not ignore these signs. They had to construct the figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattwa only from their imagination as no authentic portraits of them ever existed. So they borrowed the handy Apollonian form, the ideal as defined in the West, and with its aid expressed the Buddha or the Bodhisattwa, adding the signs, attributes and attitudes as prescribed by traditional Indian canon.

This style of art flourished even under the direct patronage of the Kushan emperors. Perhaps it was the royal sculptors that set the model for this style, which was followed by several indigenous sculptors. Almost all the works produced in this style took a classical touch and refinement. Never did these sculptures deteriorate to an exhibition of virtuosity but craftsmanship was never lost sight of. The sculptors of Gandhara evinced a mastery never known elsewhere in India. It was all, a deeply religious expression and an intense one at that. Gandhara sculpture became a byword in the art world of India for both its beauty and religious feeling. Nachana Somanatha, a Telugu poet of the fourteenth century, far in the south, compared the beauty of one of his heroines to a figure of Gandhara sculpture centuries after the style became extinct.

Parallel to Gandhara art developed an indigenous style at Muthra, in the eastern part of the Kushan empire. The sculptors of Muthra School did not take their inspiration either from the Gandhara School or the original Hellenistic art of Central Asia. The Apollonian ideal did not attract the sculptors of the Muthra School. This School of sculpture was a logical development of the traditional art of India. The sculptors of this School strictly followed the traditional canons. The figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattwa of this School carried as many as possible of the thirtytwo signs that distinguished a *mahapurush* in the canonical texts. The lionlike body, the webbed fingers, the *ushnisa,* the *urna,* the *swastica* and the wheel etc. found their places in all these sculptures. But the *ushnisa* in the Muthra sculptures differs from the *ushnisa* in the Gandhara sculptures in that the *ushnisa* of the Muthra sculptures was shown as a protuberance of the cranium whereas in the Gandhara sculptures it took the form of a knot of hair on the head. So, to an Indian, imbued with the traditions of the soil, Muthra sculptures evince a deepseated religious feeling and significance, whereas the Gandhara sculptures appear to be elegant illustrations of Buddhist texts.

The fourth century saw the dawn of the golden age of Indian art. The Indian sculptor, the architect and the painter reached their hallmark during this period. The sculptures, paintings, even architecture attained a perfection of form neither known before nor surpassed after. Most of the canonical texts were codified and systematized by this time. Symbolism became an indivisible and necessary part of the art of this period. It almost became a definite art language without the knowledge of which sculpture or painting or even a religious piece of architecture could neither be constructed nor fully appreciated. Every symbol had its ordained form, meaning and place. Several canonical texts, laying down the rules and meanings of iconography and iconometry, were formulated and written during this period. Yet the highly evolved artist of this period never lost his sense and feeling of freedom. Keeping within the limits laid down by the canonical texts he laid bare his senses and pursued his ideal, and was never hampered or weighed down by them. Thus we come across the infinite variety in every idea expressed by the artist of this unique period of the history of Indian art. Further, most of the sculptures of this great period are full of spirit, which they radiate even today. They emit so much of spiritual effluence that a sensation of infinity is forced upon us. The artifacts of this period seem to have a spirit circulating within them, and their impact on the spirit within us forces us to realise the presence of divinity in them.

This was the golden age of the Guptas that lasted for about three centuries. The unique feature of this period was that art in India served all religions with equal fervour, Buddhist and Jain as well as Brahminical. The artists of this period worked with gusto and will, and art overwhelmed and swept the whole of India like a great flood.

This great period saw not only sculptures but also the excavation of numerous caves in the manner of the finest architecture. Many such caves had decorated facades, finished pillars, painted halls and ceilings; vestibules and cells for individual monks to practise *dhyana* and *yoga.* Most of them were adorned with exquisite sculptures and illuminated by beautiful paintings. Even today, with many sculptures and paintings destroyed by the vandalism of men and all-effacing time, they stand as monuments proclaiming the golden age of the Guptas.

During the same period, as the Guptas ruled in the north, the south saw the rise of a new and powerful dynasty, equally enthusiastic about the fine arts like sculpture and architecture. This was the dynasty of the Pallavas who were originally feudatories of the Satavahanas of Andhra. We do not know exactly when the Pallavas migrated to the south and established a dominion at Kanchi. But by the time we notice them in history they are already masters of a vast empire and started carving the immortal monuments at Mahabalipuram.

Probably the Pallavas intended to continue the tradition of the Guptas. According to historians they did not undertake the construction and carvings of Mahabalipuram till about the beginning of the seventh century A.D.

Certainly the art of the Pallavas is derived from the art of Amaravati, but it was only the style they continued and did not indulge in sculpture or architecture to express Buddhism. All their carved monuments expressed only Brahminical religion. As a matter of fact, the Pallava carvings at Mahabalipuram became models for the whole of the Dravidian temple architecture that followed.

Till recently, historians believed that Pallavas were the first to conceive of a Brahminical temple and give form to it as they carved the rocks at Mahabalipuram. But recent excavations discovered four Brahminical temples in full form as early as the second century A.D. at Nagarjunakonda, about eighty miles from Amaravati. Their style of architecture cannot be determined as the ruins afford no clues to it. Perhaps, they were built in the manner of the then existing *chaitya* halls, or perhaps the construction of the *chaitya* halls followed them. Nothing can be stated or asserted until fresh material is unearthed. Till recently it was thought that the temples at Chejerla and Ter were originally Buddhist *chaityas* and later converted for Brahminical worship, as they followed the construction and style of the *chaitya* caves carved in the sides of mountains. Perhaps, fresh material will soon be unearthed to change this view.

Whatever was the original form of the Brahminical temple in the south, all temple architecture in the south followed the style of the Pallavas with modifications as the age advanced. As stated by art historians, the Pallava monolithic structures derived their forms both from the Buddhist *chaityas* and the *viharas*. The form derived from the *chaityas* became *gopuras* or the towers at the entrance of temples, and the one derived from the *vihara* structure became the style for the *vimanas*, pyramidical structures on the sanctum sanctoria of the main building of the temple. Ferguson opined that the *vimana* structure, as conceived by the Pallava architects, was derived directly from the Undavalli caves in Guntur District.

Pallava sculpture was characterised by its extraordinary animation and elongation of human forms, which qualities it actually derived from the art of Amaravati. The sculptured forms appear to be half released from the matrix of the rock and give the impression that they are only awaiting their complete release to fly away as it were. It appears as if the original sculptors discovered all these forms resting within the rock itself and just chiselled around to improve on them.

From the eighth century onwards art of India took to diverse ways and styles of expression. The art of the Palas and the Senas in the north was also the product and creation of master sculptors directly patronised by the kings and the priests. Even they, with their attenuated forms never strayed beyond the frames and limitations set and prescribed in the canonical texts. Yet, many sculptures of this period do attain a touch of infinity with the half closed eyes and the classical repose. Many sculptures of this period have also a touch of the fourth dimension, which was mainly achieved with the aid of traditional *mudras,* attitudes of hands and poses so very common in Indian art. Comparing to the artifacts of Gupta, Pallava and other classical art styles of the earlier periods the pieces of Pala and Sena art appear slightly stiff. Yet, they too have the unmistakable appearance of having been filled with the most essential element of all Indian art the *prana* or breath. Further, during this period a taste for detail and decoration developed in all the arts of India, which is aesthetically devastating. Yet, all the art of this period retained its full spiritual significance and radiated devotion to the fullest extent.

Similarly it was with the Chola art of the south. Even there the artist was tied down to the rules and principles laid down in the canonical texts much more rigorously than ever before. But the requirements had multiplied with the age and the fashion too changed. In temple architecture the early Chola style saw the rise of *vimana,* overshadowing and dominating the rest of the temple. In sculpture, the human form lost its elongation and power, and started getting stocky and static. The detail and ornamentation became more prominent, on the verge of becoming almost heavy, than in the simple, lithe and elegant forms of the Pallava period. The sculptor of this period became more conscious of his skill, virtuosity overshadowing expression. The architects and sculptors of this period were also men of vision. Though weighed down by traditions and canons, with their inborn love for detail and decoration they still achieved in expression. The sculpture of this period is also full of spirit. Artists achieved plasticity and personal expression even in those iconographically stylized forms. They expressed a feeling of religion as intense as that of the earlier periods.

The later Chola period saw the rise of *gopuras* of the temple and their domination over the whole temple architecture. In sculpture, the human figure became more stocky, detail and ornamentation dominating, even sometimes hampering, the stylization of the human figure.

The invasion of Muslims from the northwest was a landmark in the history of India. It changed the course of the art history of this country. It is difficult to imagine what course Indian art and architecture would have taken, if the Muslims had not invaded, and made India their homeland. With their fanatic zeal against all forms of religion which utilised formal arts as means of religious expression, they swept the country like a hurricane devastating all the art life of the Hindus as they advanced inwards and established themselves the masters of this country. The Hindu became more conscious of his religion and the fear of losing his long cherished traditions gripped him. So his art thereafter tried to express the tradition more than the religion itself. This is apparent in all the art forms of later periods. Religious art became almost bereft of life, with no spirit. The architects and sculptors fastidiously stuck more to the rules laid down in the canonical texts than to express the spirit of Hindu religion. The temples erected during the Muslim period became almost codified religious texts rather than centres of devotion and spiritual expression.

During all those periods, art in India existed only as a form of devotion and primarily a religious expression. Nevertheless it formed a part of life.

The ancient and the medieval artists of India conceived the form of God in several definite and finite forms handed down to them from ages.

The *Rigveda* mentions about thirtythree gods that ruled the universe and decided the fate of man on earth. They were all anthropomorphic. Since then, conceptions of gods considerably changed. Gods and goddesses added and multiplied. Even their forms underwent innumerable changes. The epics, the *puranas* and the evergrowing folklore—all these contributed to this effect.

At a critical moment all the gods became definite and their forms were defined and codified in innumerable texts. Thus gradually a great tradition was built up; canonical texts were composed and written. The ancient artist, who set about his task, was bound and guided by the many and various texts. From generation to generation, they were handed down to him, sometimes with additions and interpolations.

Yet, he never felt hampered or frustrated and chose a god or a goddess whose form could express his aspirations and desires. He worked his way to infinity, never conscious of the limitations binding him, for those limitations were there to guide him to the final form of the god he desired. In fact, he felt that the stern discipline set by the traditions and the canonical texts was the only way which would enable him to commune with the universe, with the aid of the form imposed upon him.

The art of India though religious was a grand means of significant, beautiful expression. Even here the climate and the milieu played their part in the formation and development of indigenous traits. Here man found himself in the presence of an aspect of nature at once generous and fierce. Life and death impose themselves here with equal vigour and violence. Nourishing vegetation, roots, fruit and grain sprouted from the soil in abundance and man had only to stretch his hand to gather life. But the stretched hand might suddenly be struck by death. When he entered the woods to gather life, death rose irresistibly, in the form of a cobra under the grass, or a tiger in the thicket. When he approached the river for the life giving water, a crocodile might rise up and snatch him with its jaws of death.

So, the Indian accepted life and death with indifference and laid open his senses to the penetration of the universe. He gathered a great pantheon which became his science, his religion and his philosophy. All the gods and goddesses conceived by him wore at the same time signs of protection as well as instruments of destruction. This, an apparent contradiction to a foreigner, was the expression of the infallible and naked truth hidden in the heart of the universe, termed *maya* by the Indian.

In India, the artist never conceived of sculpture as being able to live independently of the construction it decorated. So it takes the form of buds on a heavy plant. It is always surrounded by an entrancing mystery; the torso, the arms, the legs and the head all commingle.

Again, sculpture in India was never considered in its planes and passages. It can be defined almost in terms of painting. In almost all the bas reliefs and other sculptures light and shade play a vital and continuous part. It is as if a brush moved over them, softening and caressing.

Hindu painting, while preserving all the qualities of sculpture, is more purified. As one critic observed, the Hindus fuse in their painting the spiritual radiance of ancient Egyptian painting and the moral intoxication of ancient Chinese art. Linear rhythms, the chief characteristic of both the Egyptian and the Greek sculptors, play a great part in Indian painting. Even the Hindu sculptor sought to transfer to stone and metal the fleeting feeling of modelling of the Hindu painter.

But this modelling aims at movement rather than form. It was considered neither in an isolated way nor in the abstract, but always in relationship to the neighbouring figure. A Hindu temple, decorated with sculpture and illuminated with paintings, becomes a single whole, in its conception, construction and appreciation. Everything is an inevitable part of the whole and has no independent existence.

It is movement, not form, that interests the Indian sculptor or painter. So, he does not seek harmonies of relationship, but expresses only in moving masses a florid, bright, intoxicating image of the whole universe.

If one sees the sculptures or paintings as isolated ones, one cannot fail to note the special qualities of these figures. They are gentle and religious. They might be full of sensuality and even carnal heaviness but their dignity cannot fail to impress.

LEPAKSHI

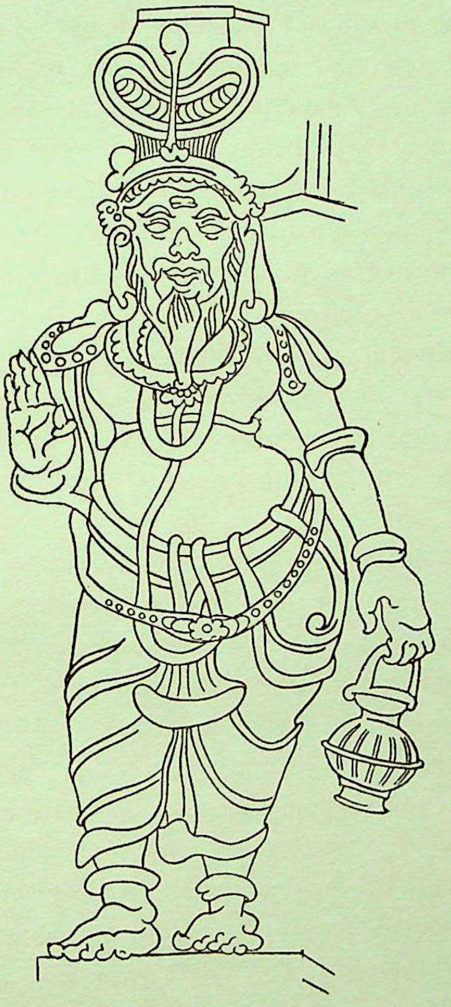
The Indian artist never attempted to bring human form to realization as the ancient Greeks did. It is only linear rhythm that created this. Everything the form contains is only as a suggestion. It is an unconscious abstraction. Still, a prodigious life animates the form. It bulges and bellows with life-sustaining breath. It undulates and grows tense at the same time. One feels it was not individual skill that modelled this rock or metal into a storm of waves but desire, will and enthusiasm. An indomitable spirit pervades these sculptures and paintings.

In the architecture of India, one must not seek the linear abstractions which by their continuity express the visible rhythm of life. What is sought and found is life itself gathered and pressed into form. The unity of the world is expressed in Indian architecture by gathering up everything that belongs to life under the Sun into one totality.

As in every age and clime, even in ancient India, art defined the passions and will of men. As it stands today, it recounts that ancient Indian to us and through him the heart of the universe.

CHAPTER II

THE SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLE



RAJARISHI

It is not possible to state exactly when the Hindus started building Brahminical temples in India. The Indus Valley discoveries present everything that human civilization demanded during those prehistoric times except a temple of worship. Both at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, it was a developed urban civilization that is discovered. There were well laid, geometrically straight streets flanked by two storeyed houses built of burnt bricks; a well planned underground drainage almost modern in its conception; public baths that could accommodate several bathers at one time; a centrally situated market place; huge granaries and all that is wanted in a developed municipal town. There were also discovered painted pottery, utensils, pieces of sculpture in bronze, stone and terracotta, ornaments, beads, cylindrical seals and everything that proclaimed the high degree of civilization the inhabitants of those cities enjoyed. Among the artifacts discovered are the figure of a priest with a band across his brow and a trefoil mantle over his shoulder, a bronze figure of a dancer and other figures of several deities; prominent among them are the figure of a Tree goddess, and that of Pasupati, a three headed deity in a *yogasana* surrounded by various animal forms. Historians opine that these indicated a religion with cults of Mother Goddess and Rudra or Siva. Both these cults became prominent in the later modes of Dravidian worship and finally they were absorbed into all-embracing Hinduism.

So it is certain that the people of prehistoric India had a religion, though its form may not be defined. Yet, no temple of worship is discovered either in those twin cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa or any other site excavated. Perhaps the single undug mound at Mohenjodaro may uncover a temple, if at all it is excavated. It is indeed hard to imagine an ancient civilization with established cults and settled, rich urban life without a temple of worship.

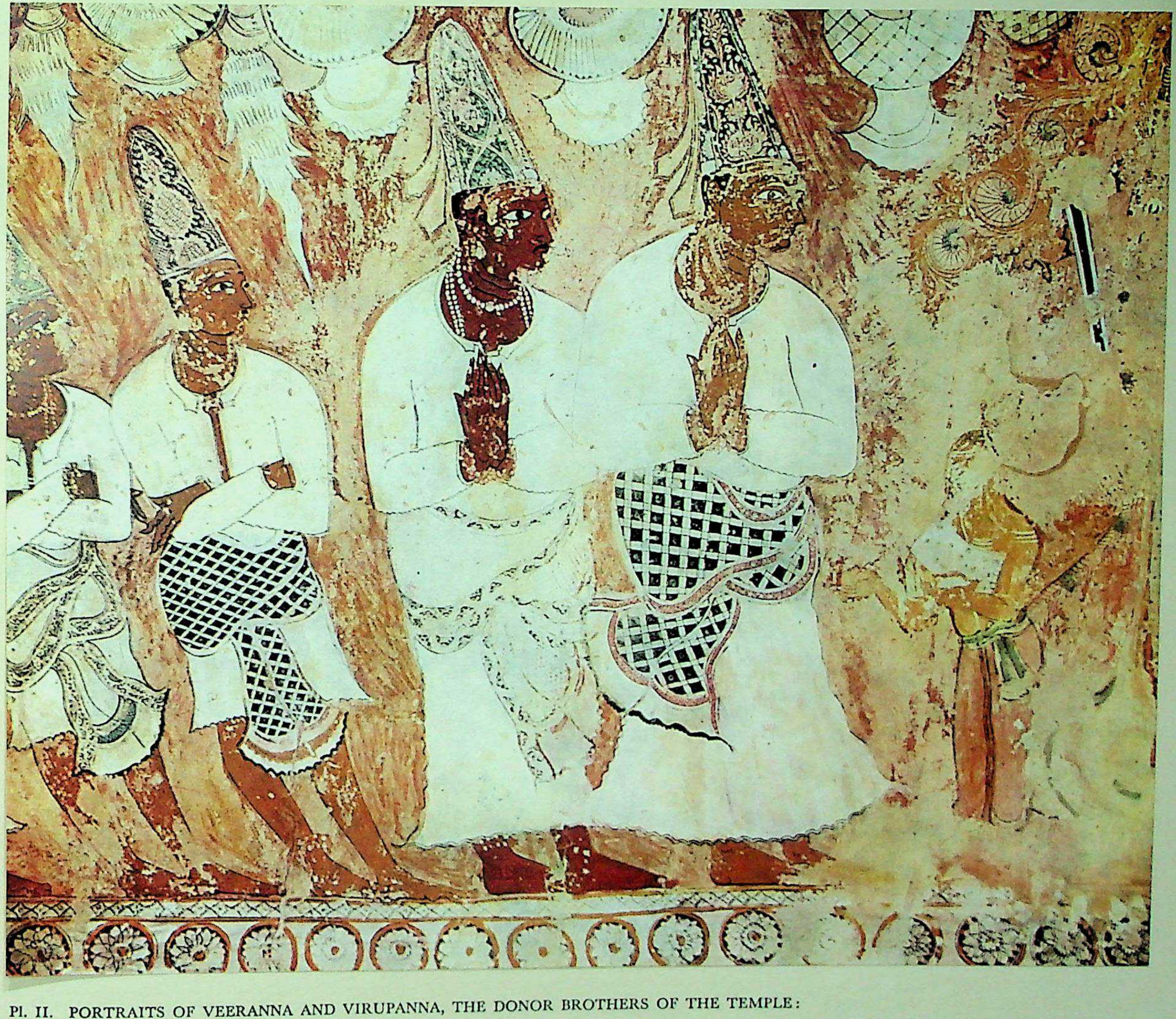
The prehistoric people of India might or might not have had temples and even if they had, we have no means to know their form and architecture. But it is certain that the *Vedic* Aryans of India did not build any temples. Nevertheless they worshipped gods. Even a few goddesses are found mentioned in the *Rigveda*. They were all anthropomorphic. There were the gods of the heaven, the gods of the atmosphere, and the gods of the earth. During the sacrifices they were invoked and paid tributes and even sometimes appeased at the altars specially erected for the particular *yagna*. The *Vedic* Aryans did not consider permanent structures to house their gods, for it was essentially an age of sacrifices and the *Vedas* and the *Vedic* literature that followed are significantly silent about temples and like structures.

Perhaps during the Mauryan times, Hindus erected temples to house their deities. In Kautilya's *Arthasastra,* which pundits date as belonging to the third century B.C., there is but a single reference to such structures. "In the centre of the city, the apartments of gods, such as Aparajita, Apratihata, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Siva, Vaisravana, Asvina, and the abode of Goddess Madira shall be situated. In the corners, the guardian deities of the ground shall be appropriately set up. Likewise the principal gates, such as Brahma, Indra, Yama and Sainapatya shall be constructed; and at a distance of hundred bows from the ditch, places of worship and pilgrimage, groves and buildings shall be constructed. Guardian deities of all quarters shall also be set up in quarters appropriate to them." From this significant reference Sri Pandurang Vaman Kane concludes that Brahminical temples of deities must have existed from the fourth or even the fifth century B.C. But remains, or even traces, of such ancient Brahminical temples have not been discovered. Perhaps they were all constructed in wood as it was the case with almost all architecture of India during those early times. However, we have no means to have an idea of the forms and architecture of the temples during that period.

But the early Buddhist literature made no references to any Brahminical temple. The early Buddhists certainly erected permanent structures for worship. They built *stupas* even at the time of Buddha's *parinirvana* at about the end of fifth century B.C. It is said, that they built actually ten *stupas* soon after his death, eight on his remains, one on the urn with which the relics were measured and one on the coals of the pyre. It is also mentioned that the one erected on the coals was a shrine. However, we cannot be certain when the *stupas* or the symbols of the *stupas* actually became objects of worship.

Perhaps, Buddhists started worshipping the *stupas* that contained the remains of the Buddha since the day of his *parinirvana*. But it is certain that during Mauryan times, the *stupas* became objects of Buddhist worship. According to one legend, Asoka Maurya collected the relics of the Buddha from the original eight *stupas,* divided them into eighty thousand parts and erected eighty thousand *stupas* all over India, to fecilitate the worship of the Buddha by every devotee all over this great subcontinent. This might have been an exaggeration as it is not fully supported either by archaeology or by history. Several *stupas,* said to have been erected by the Great Asoka, are found even today all over India. And most of them are *dhatugarbhas,* i.e. *stupas* containing the relics of the Buddha.

Exactly when the Buddhists thought of housing a replica of the *stupa,* within a closed structure, for the purposes of worship and ritual cannot be determined. But even during the second century B.C. we come across caves hollowed out of mountains, with a *stupa* in the interior, for the twin purposes of worship and ritual. These *stupas* served only as icons for worship, so in reality they were not *stupas* at all. According to Ferguson, *stupas* were mainly of three kinds: *dhatugarbhas,* i.e. *stupas* containing relics, *smaraka stupas,* i.e. memorial



Pl. II. PORTRAITS OF VEERANNA AND VIRUPANNA, THE DONOR BROTHERS OF THE TEMPLE: ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

stupas, ankita stupas, i.e. *stupas* dedicated to one Buddha or *Arhat.* Probably, the icon *stupas* in the *chaitya grihas* might have belonged to the third category, i.e. *ankita stupas.*

All the *chaitya* caves cut in the sides of mountains were, according to scholars, in imitation of independent wooden structures erected in the plains. For, in fact, the early *chaitya* caves followed the style of wood architecture in matters of both construction and decoration. So, it can be said, that the Buddhists started erecting *chaityas,* though in wood, earlier than second century B.C.

Apart from Kautilya's *Arthasastra,* in *Kathasaritsagara* too there are references to the Brahminical temples of worship. *Kathasaritsagara* was a translation of parts of *Brihat katha* and was done by Soma deva bhatta about the beginning of the twelfth century A.D. So we can safely infer that Brahminical temples existed along with Buddhist *chaityas* during the early centuries B.C., but even they must have been wooden structures and no traces of such structures are available to us today.

The excavations at Nagarjunakonda uncovered remains of lithic structures of atleast four Brahminical temples. From these few remains now available, we can infer that they were complete temple structures with *mantapas* and *prasadas.* It is not yet possible to reconstruct their architectural forms, as the existing remains are not enough to give a clue to those forms. But we now know definitely that the beginnings of the Brahminical temple architecture in India were not made with them, for they are lithic, and followed the wooden forms that went before them. Secondly, the *mantapa* is an appended addition to the main body of a Brahminical temple and as such is certainly a later development. Such an addition to the body of the temple could have been conceived only after some time had elapsed since the beginnings of Brahminical temple architecture. So even at a conservative estimate, it can be inferred that Brahminical temples existed atleast four or five centuries earlier. Perhaps, they were also built of wood, as all the architecture of India during those times and it must be due to this that we do not come across any remains of earlier temples.

The earliest Brahminical temples preserved even up to this day are, one at Chejerla in Guntur District and the other at Ter in Nal Durg District. They are barrel vaulted structures, the back end being rounded up, in the manner of the hind part of an elephant and completely built in brick and mortar. In the Indian traditional terminology such a form of architecture is termed as *gajapristaakara* or the form of the hind part of an elephant. The facade of the temple at Ter closely resembles the facade of the Buddhist rockcut *chaitya* at Elura. But the facade of the Chejerla temple is similar to medieval and modern Brahminical structures. This facade might have been altered to its present form at a later date for reasons not now known. Perhaps the facade retained at Ter was the traditional form for all such structures of that period. According to Ferguson such structures for worship were quite numerous during those times throughout India.

All these temples have the apse, the nave and the aisle similar to the cave *chaityas* excavated in the mountains earlier. Even the pedestal of the Brahminical deity is placed exactly on the spot where the replica of a *stupa* should be in a Buddhist *chaitya.* Architecturally, they fully conform to the Buddhist *chaityas* of the same and earlier periods. Historians date these buildings belonging to the fourth century A.D.

Ferguson and a few other historians believed that the temples at Chejerla and Ter were originally Buddhist *chaityas* and were later converted to Brahminical worship, the reason being they completely conformed in structure and form to the existing and previous Buddhist *chaityas*. But today, we can no longer hold to this viewpoint. They could be originally Brahminical temples, for there is enough evidence to prove that the Hindus were building Brahminical temples at almost the same time as the Buddhists. Perhaps, they did not differ much in form and structure from the Buddhist *chaityas* of those early times.

The seventh century of the present era is very significant and marked a revolution in the art and architecture of the Brahminical temples, distinct in form and structure from the Buddhist houses of worship. The oblong structure, rounded at one end, with a running nave at the centre and running aisles in the sides and an apse at one end to house the icon, gave place to cubical structures with a pyramidical or curvilinear tower at the top. The square became the basis of all Brahminical temple architecture from the seventh century A.D.

During the seventh century A.D. Pallavas excavated rocks to serve as models to all the Dravidian temple architecture that followed. They excavated about nine *rathas,* and about thirteen or fourteen caves in a rocky ridge at Mahabalipuram. The *rathas* are monolithic structures and architecturally important. Five are in one group named after the *Pandava* heroes and Draupadi, and the sixth is the Ganesh *ratha* situated in isolation at the end of the village. Of these the Dharmaraja *ratha* became the model for the *vimana* and the Ganesh *ratha* for the *gopura* of the Dravidian temple.

The form of the *vimana* is a pyramidical structure on the main body of the temple, almost a cube, as in the Dharmaraja *ratha*. This pyramid is formed of several storeys, each being distinctly stepped back from the one below it, forming a platform with a parapet on each, and ending in a dome at the top, almost like the ancient Buddhist *viharas*. The *gopuras* that became prominent in the later Dravidian architecture followed this style closely with the one departure of not having a parapet for each platform, and also the pyramid was topped not with a dome but with an oblong, vaulted ceiling across the structure in the fashion of the *salas* or discussion halls of the Buddhists.

We need not discuss here who these Pallavas were, or whence and how they came to Kanchi and excavated the rockcut temples at Mahabalipuram. But they originated a style of temple architecture very distinct from the style of the previous Buddhistic *chaitya* architecture. The temples of the north, whose beginnings are traced in Orissa about the eighth century of our era, have a distinct style of their own, completely different from the Pallava style. They too have a cubical structure to house the icon. But the *sikharas* or towers erected over them take a curvilinear form and end in an *amalaka*. The Chalukyan style of the west is also different. The temples stand on a specially erected terrace three or four feet in height, with a starshaped plinth. It is as if a square is turned on a pivot, and the temple erected on it. The western Chalukyan temples have rounded pillars as if turned on a lathe and also perforated stone screens by which they are easily recognised. None of the *sikharas* of the northern or western temples have the abundance of detail which chiefly marks the temples of the Pallavas.

An abundance of detail and profusion of sculpture covered all the temples of Pallava architecture; the design had been well thought out and systematically expressed in stone to get a complete architectural effect. This is accomplished to a great extent by the application of the true principles of design. Numerous minor features are so grouped that they lead the eye upto the central crowning object of the structure which is the *vimana* tower.

Later, during the Pallava period many temples were constructed according to the principles enunciated in the rockcut temples at Mahabalipuram. These builders had thorough knowledge of their materials. The sub basements and plinths were of hard granite, the cubical cell of soft sandstone, and the towers above of brick construction. This order of materials in the construction was followed in all temples erected during the following periods as well.

All the temple architecture of south India that followed the Pallava style can be divided approximately into six distinct periods:

1.	Pallava	... ...	A.D. 600 to 850
2.	Early Chola	... ...	A.D. 850 to 1150
3.	Later Chola	... ...	A.D. 1150 to 1350
4.	Vijayanagar	... ...	A.D. 1350 to 1600
5.	Post Vijayanagar	... ...	A.D. 1600 to 1900
6.	Modern	... ...	A.D. 1900 and later

The rockcut temples such as those at Mahabalipuram were built only in the Pallava period. In fact, they served as original models for all the temples constructed during the periods that followed. But the Pallava period did not stop with these experimental rockcut *rathas.* Other temples were built following the design and principles of these monolithic *rathas,* the most important of them being the shore temples at Mahabalipuram and the Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram. Both of them are in a good state of preservation. No worship is being carried out in the shore temple at Mahabalipuram and it today remains only as an archaeological monument of great interest.

Many forms that existed in the previous periods in an embryonic stage underwent changes in the following periods. Later some of them became atrophied and continued to be so for some time and in some cases they disappeared altogether. The changes were not only architectural but also sculptural. They pertain only to the detail and decorative element.

During the early Chola period the *vimana* assumed gigantic proportions. It is to this part of the edifice the architects of the period gave all the care. The great *vimanas* of Tanjore and Gangaikondapuram belong to this period. They are magnificently erected and rise almost 190 feet high. In the following periods, *vimanas* get atrophied and finally reduced to forms of only a few feet height.

In the temples prior to the later Chola period one finds only the embryo of *gopuras.* The temple of Kailasanatha at Kanchipuram has only a miniature *gopura.* At the temple of Tanjore, which belongs to the early Chola period, the *gopura* is already a little elevated. But at the later Chola epoch we find grand and beautiful *gopuras.* The *gopuras* of Chidambaram and Jambukeswaram are perfect examples of this period.

Though the epoch of Vijayanagar period saw still more immense *gopuras,* it is evident, that this part of the edifice was not much cared for. It was not upon this that the sculptor of the period concentrated his efforts. During the Vijayanagar epoch a new form of construction appeared, the form of the *mantapa* or resting place.

LEPAKSHI

This *mantapa* of the Vijayanagar period arrests our attention by its monolithic pillars, in which are sculptured horses, rearing lions, gods and goddesses. The *kalyana mantapas* of Hampi, Kanchipuram and Vellore and the *mantapas* of Lepakshi are characteristic of the art of this period.

Following the Vijayanagar period came the post Vijayanagar style or semi-modern style. It is distinguished by its corridor. A perfect example of the architecture of this period is the temple at Rameswaram, where the predominance of the corridor becomes manifest. Another example is the most celebrated temple at Madura, with its *pudu mantapa*.

The absolutely modern period after 1900 A.D. cannot boast of any temple construction of noticeable dimensions. During this period the activity of temple construction is mostly kept to renovation and restoration of dilapidated ancient temples. Nevertheless a few temples of small dimensions were constructed, which really cannot come under the purview of architecture. The style of all these temples is eclectic. Most of the forms, those of structure as well as sculpture are borrowed indiscriminately from all the ancient styles. Even though much labour is spent on them, they do not derive the look of a temple or a piece of sacred architecture.

In addition to the main forms of the edifice several other motifs, subsidiary architectural motifs, and also motifs of ornamentation and sculpture underwent consecutive changes during all these epochs. The most characteristic of them were the corbels or *bodhikas* as termed in the traditional architectural texts or *bodigai* as the Tamil architect called it. The corbel with curved profile, sometimes simple and sometimes ornamented with rollers, belonged exclusively to the Pallava period.

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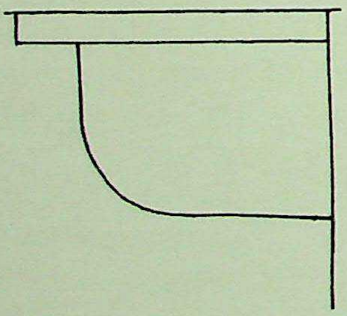

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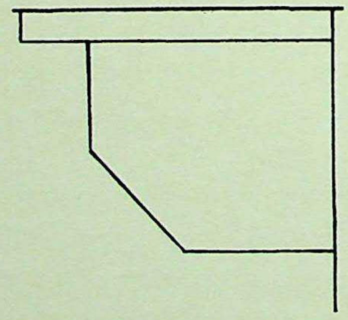

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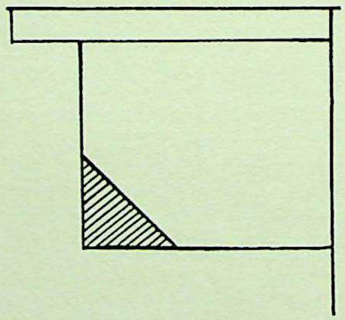

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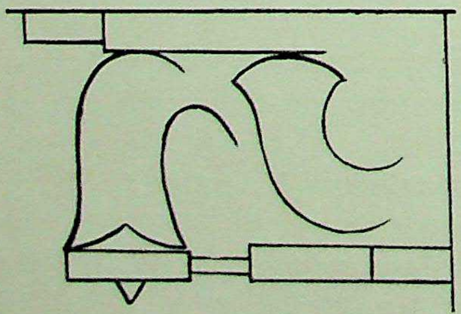

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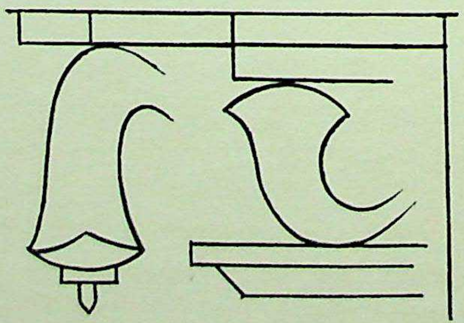
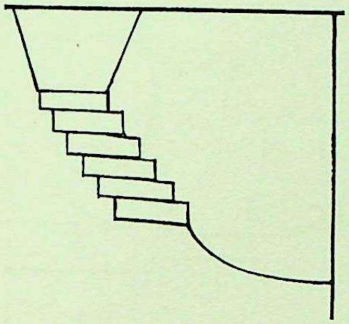
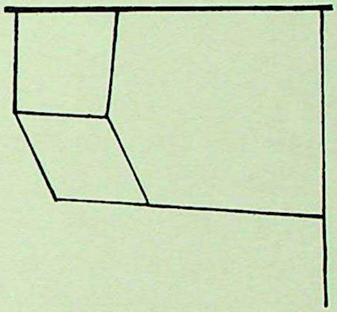


These figures illustrate the successive changes, the form of the *Bodhika* underwent during the consecutive epochs. Form 2 appeared sometime in the late Pallava period became frequent in the early Chola and was very popular in the later Chola period, but again disappeared in the following epochs.

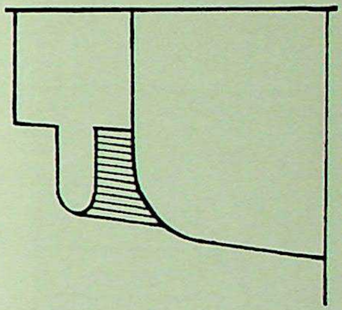
This form sometimes appeared in the Vijayanagar period also, but was gradually transformed into form 4 and this motif in the corbel became baroque in character during the post Vijayanagar period. In this it can be seen that the original form of the corbel in the Pallava times was derived from the art of carpentry and became completely lithic in character during Vijayanagar times. The following figures completely illustrate the evolution of this motif during all these successive epochs.



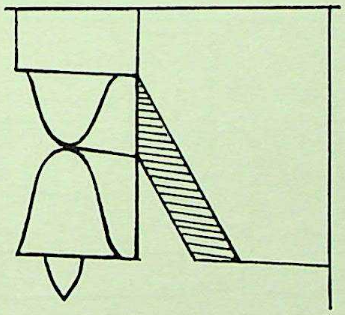
Pallava



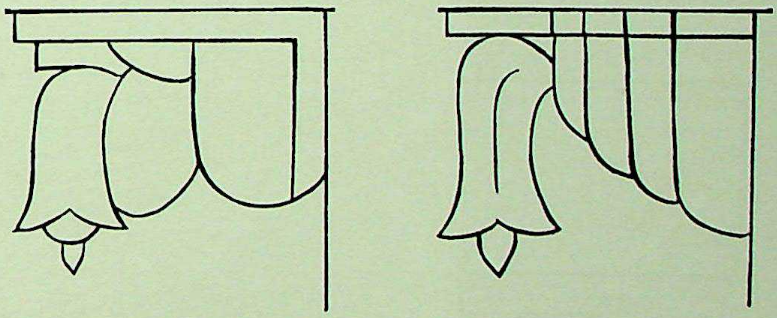
Early Chola



Later Chola



Vijayanagar

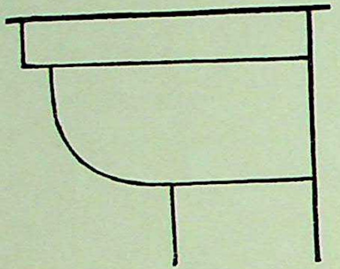


Post Vijayanagar

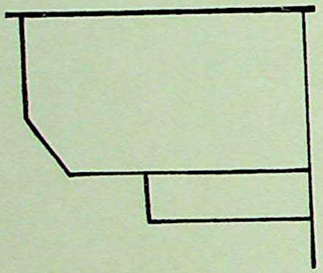
HISTORY OF BODHIKA OR BODIGAI

Another characteristic motif that underwent a gradual evolution was the ornamental arch employed in the structures of the *vimanas* and the *gopuras*. These arches appeared in front of the *chaitya* caves, not as a matter of ornamentation, but as a part of the architecture with well defined function. In later Buddhist structure they lost their functional value and became motifs of ornamentation. In the Pallava *rathas* these arches found place only as ornamentations with heads of *gandharvas* sculptured as if peeping out of the arches. These heads appeared even in the early Chola period. In all the epochs that followed the arches became perfectly ornamental, and served no function but the decorative. This arch is called the *kudu* apparently derived from its synonym in Telugu the *gudu* meaning a nest.

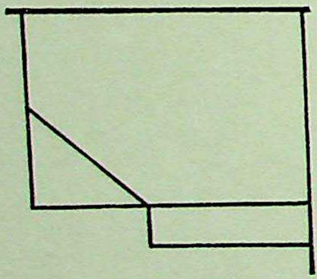
LEPAKSHI



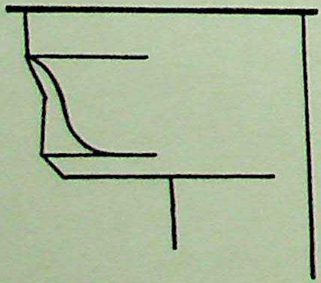
Pallava



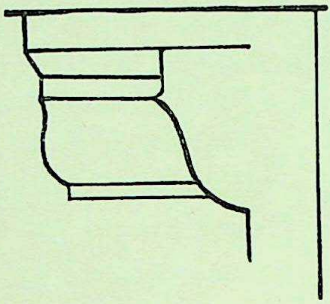
Early Chola



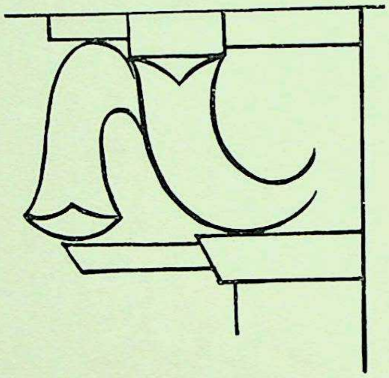
Early Chola



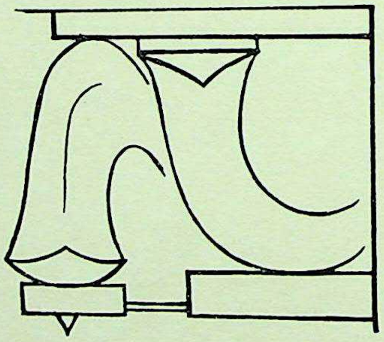
Later Chola



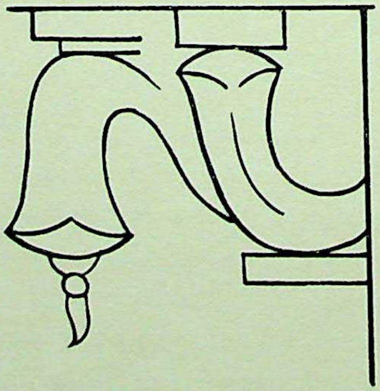
Later Chola



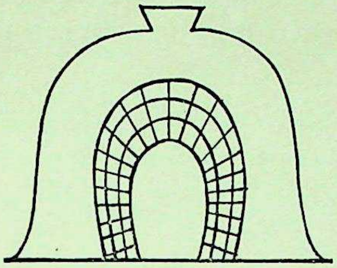
Pushpa Bodigai

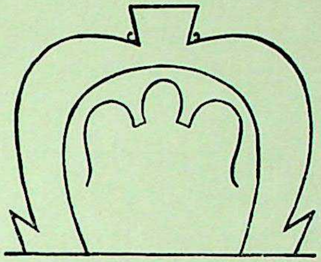


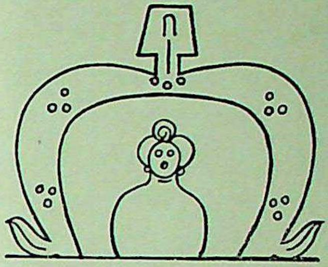
Pushpa Bodigai

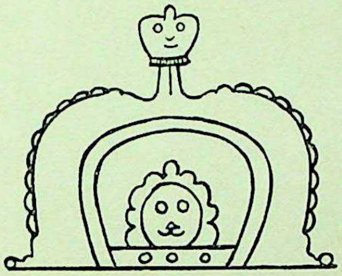


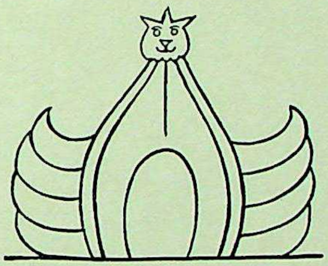
Pushpa Bodigai

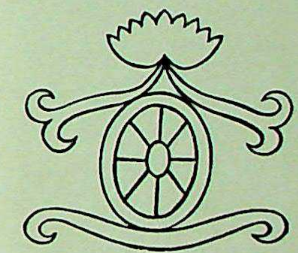

Early Buddhist

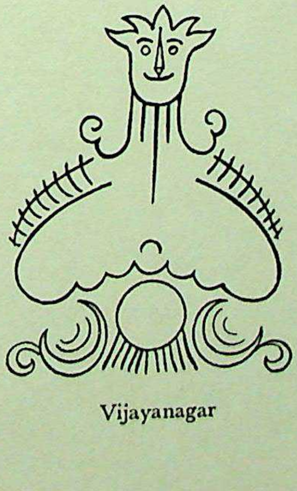

Later Buddhist

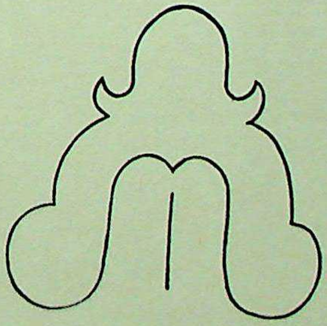

Pallava


Early Chola


Later Chola


Pandya


Vijayanagar


Post Vijayanagar

The Pallava *kudu* was characterised by the head of a shovel. In other epochs the upper part of the *kudu* became the head of a lion. It is called *simha mukha,* or face of the lion. However, the leaves which adorn the circular part of the *kudu* differ in appearance at every epoch in such a manner that it is often easy to know the age of an edifice by the appearance of the *kudu* itself.

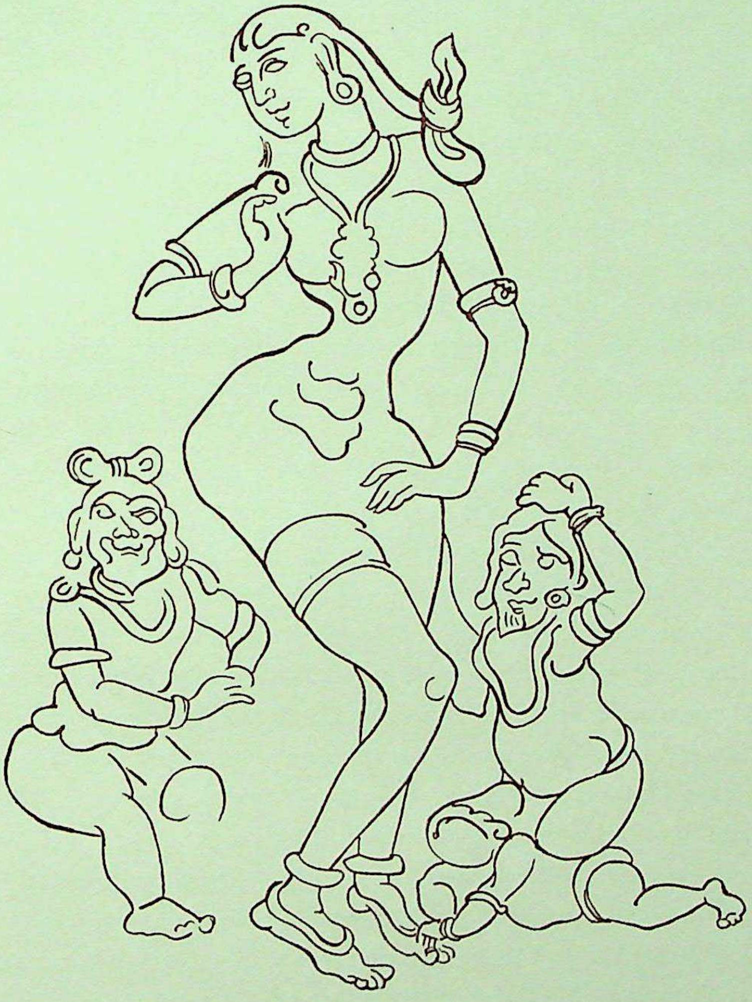
Thus during all these epochs, other ornamental motifs that covered both the *vimanas* and the *gopuras* went through several changes, marking a gradual evolution from the original forms in wood to the lithic. Later they became baroque in character and almost ended in rococo style and became absolutely flamboyant and decorative, losing all sense of function and functional values.

In the modern temple architecture the ornamentation is not evolved at all from the previous ages, but chosen arbitrarily from the ancient temples without any respect for either order or function.

Thus the simple square temple that began in the seventh century as a deviation from the forms used by the Buddhists, became a school of architecture in itself with marked evolution and development until it became complicated to such an extent that the Dravidian temple became almost a wild ornamental structure bereft of all rhythm and function.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY



MOHINI

Before proceeding to view the art of the temple at Lepakshi, we must glance at the history and religious conditions of Dekhan and south India upto about the end of the 16th century, for it was about in the middle of the 16th century the temple was constructed.

The year 1001 A.D. saw the first inroads into India of the Mussalmans from across the northwest border under the great and ruthless leader Mohammad Ghazni. He invaded the plains of the Punjab, then Multan, and later other places in India. But he never tried to take a foothold in this country. After a lapse of about two centuries, the Mussalmans were firmly established at Delhi. One war followed another and from that period onwards north India knew no rest.

At the end of the 13th century, the Mussalmans began to press southwards into Dekhan. In 1293 Alauddin captured Devagiri. In 1303 there was an attempt at the reduction of Warangal. In 1309 Malik Kafur swept into Dekhan with an immense force and devastated large parts. In 1310 the capital of the Hoyasala Ballalas at Dwarasamudra was taken and in 1323 Warangal fell.

The period around 1330 found the whole of northern India down to the Vindhya mountains under the Moslem rule, and the Moslems had nearly overrun Dekhan. The entire south now found itself threatened with the same fate. About this period, the whole country south of the Krishna river was still under Hindu domination. But this supremacy was shaken by the rapidly advancing menace from the north. Suddenly, about the year 1336 there appeared a check to this wave of ruthless foreign invasions, caused by a combination of the three small Hindu states of Warangal, Dwarasamudra and Anegondi. Thus arose a solid wall of opposition which protected southern India for almost 250 years.

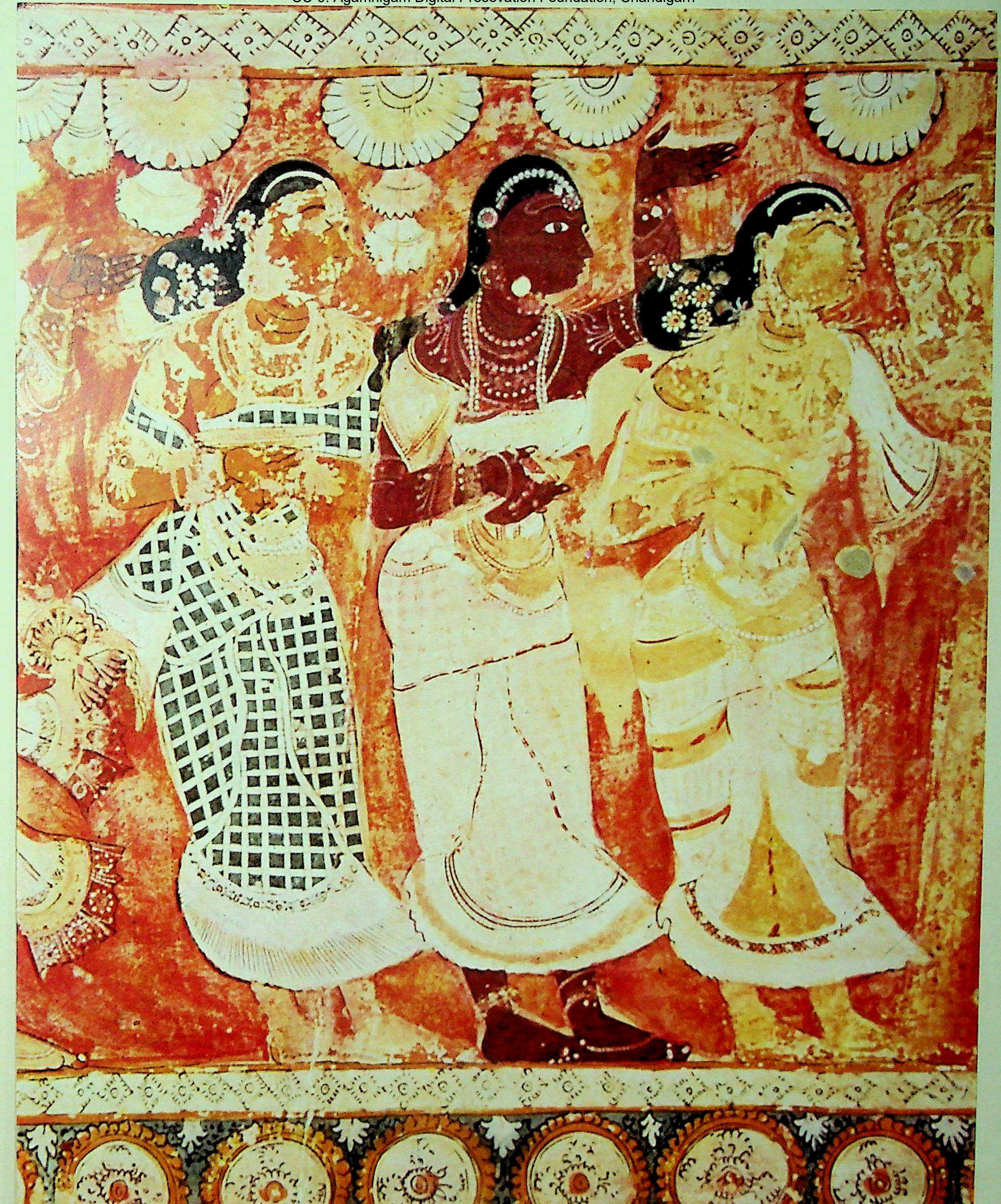
Most authorities agree that the empire of Vijayanagar was founded in, or about 1336 A.D. The founders of this great empire were two Hindu princes Hakka raya and Bukka raya, sons of Sangama. In their enterprise, they were aided by Vidyaranya, the *guru* of the *math* at Sringeri. Vidyaranya became the first minister of this state.

This first dynasty of Vijayanagar, known as the Sangama dynasty, consisted of nine kings, and occupied the throne for one hundred and fortytwo years, from 1336 to 1478. Then the throne passed to a Saluva chief who was succeeded by his son. Thus the Saluva dynasty had only two kings. Then followed the Tuluva dynasty which ruled for seventyone years from 1496 to 1567. This dynasty had six kings. It was at the fag end of the rule of this dynasty in 1565, that the armies of the empire were defeated at Talikota, and the city of Vijayanagar was sacked and destroyed. However, the last king of this dynasty shifted his capital to Penukonda and continued to rule the broken empire for a few years from there. Then followed the fourth and final dynasty of the empire. It was the dynasty of Ramaraja, known as the Aravidu dynasty. This dynasty also had six kings.

Hakka raya assumed the name of Harihara raya and was the first king of the new empire, with Vidyaranya as his first minister. Kampa or Kampanna, another brother of Hakka raya became the ruler of the eastern part of the kingdom towards Nellore. He had Sayana, the brother of Vidyaranya, as his minister. Sayana is today remembered for his authoritative commentaries of the *Vedas*.

The first kings of Vijayanagar had Virupaksha, one form of Siva, as their family deity, but their crest bore the figure of *varaha*. So the very beginnings of the empire were founded on a confederation of Hindu states, and a liberal and universal outlook in matters of religion. Both cults of Siva and Vishnu were merged in the religion of the ruling house. Harihara did not achieve much during his life time, except founding this new empire. But Bukka raya, who came after him, became famous and was referred to as one who "freed from enemies a hundred royal cities and ruled over an empire perfect in its seven parts."

Harihara established the capital and named it Vidyanagara after his *guru* Vidyaranya Sripada. But the building of the city and the transformation of its name to Vijayanagar or the city of victory were attributed to Bukka raya. In the old inscriptions he had several titles, "Destroyer of hostile kings", "Sultan over Hindu kings" etc. He was a terror to the Turushkas. The Jains at that time were being persecuted by the Vaishnavas, and appealed to the king for protection. He summoned the leaders of both the sects and declared that there should be peace between them. He took the hand of the Jain leader, placed it in the hand of the Vaishnava *guru* and ordained that they should pursue their religious practices with equal freedom. Copies of this decree were set up in various places and some of them still exist. This decree marked the end of all kinds of religious persecution and the beginnings of outright religious tolerance and universal outlook almost modern in its conception in south India. This became one of the foundations on which the Vijayanagar empire rested and thrived during its best periods.



Pl. III. MAIDS IN ATTENDANCE OF SIVA: ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

Harihara II, Bukka raya's son, succeeded him to the throne. Harihara II principally became famous for making the *shodasa danas* at various sacred places. His dominion extended from the Krishna river at Kurnool in the north, to Kumbakonam or even further south. But during his period, several struggles were going on with the sultans of the Bahimini kingdom of Gulburga which was founded in 1347, only eleven years after Vijayanagar was founded. In 1380, the Mussalmans swarmed over the hill fort of Adoni and the kingdom around. But the son of Mallappa Odeyar defeated them. He took possession of both the fort and the kingdom and handed them over to Harihara II. Again in 1384, the Mussalmans attacked Kothakonda. Later in 1397, we hear of general Gunda of the Vijayanagar armies and his exploits. He conquered the Yavanas, the Turushkas and the Andhras and set up pillars of victory in all the fiftysix countries. He restored the *gopura* of the Belur temple which was razed to the ground by Ganga salar, the Mussalman general from Gulbarga. Harihara raya died on the 30th August 1404 A.D.

Then Harihara's son Immadi Bukka raya, or Bukka raya II, came to the throne. His reign was short. He ruled only for a little over one year. Thus, his brother Pratapa deva raya, son of Harihara by a different wife, succeeded him. Pratapa deva raya was crowned on the 7th November 1406 A.D. But his acquisition of power was not without difficulty, for sons of Immadi Bukka raya contended for the throne. However, Pratapa deva raya gained it and there are some inscriptions describing him as the founder of the Pratapa dynasty.

Even during Pratapa deva raya's reign, struggles with the Mussalmans of the north continued unabated. Ferista wrote several accounts of such battles. In all these accounts Ferista called Pratapa deva raya as Dewal roy or Deva raya. This Pratapa raya or Deva raya was succeeded by his son Vijaya raya. His reign was also short. He was followed by Deva raya II, also called Praudha raya. He was a great elephant hunter, and had the title *Gajabentakara* or elephant hunter. He was famous for his valour and conquests. The kings of many countries like Anga, Vanga, Kannoja, Kambhoja and even Nepala were said to have acted as his servants. He was very liberal in his outlook and had ten thousand Mussalman horsemen in his service. He died in May, 1446, and his son Mallikarjuna, also called Immadi Deva raya came to the throne. He was followed by his son Virupaksha. These last two reigns were weak and lacked vigour.

Now the Saluva dynasty entered the arena. Saluva Narasimha was the general of the armies of Vijayanagar and successfully defended it against Mussalmans. He usurped the throne of Vijayanagar in 1478. During his reign also the Bahimini Sultans invaded Vijayanagar once. This Narasimha was succeeded by his son, Immadi Nrisimha and he was murdered in 1496 by his general Tuluva Narasimha or Narasa raya.

Thus the Saluva dynasty came to an end and the glorious era of the Tuluvas began. Tuluva Narasa raya was a great warrior and general. He is said to have conquered Chera, Chola, Pandya and the king of Madura, the Gajapati, and also fierce and proud Turushka and many other kings. He bestowed the *shodasa danas* from time to time in Rameswaram and other sacred places wherever his empire extended. He died in 1503.

Narasa raya was succeeded in turn by his three sons born to him by different wives. The first of these was Vira Narasimha, also called Bhujabala raya. He was both powerful and popular. His half brother, Krishna deva raya, next came to the throne. He was the most powerful and distinguished of the Vijayanagar emperors and was himself a great soldier and general. About 1520 he captured Raichur and inflicted a severe defeat on the Mussalmans. After that he made several expeditions and extended the limits of his empire to Cuttack in the east, and to Salsetti in the west. He was a celebrated poet, and great patron of both Sanskrit and Telugu literature. He had at his court eight celebrated Telugu poets called *asta diggajas*. He was also a great builder.

On Krishna deva raya's death, his half brother Achyuta deva raya succeeded to the throne about 1530 A.D. It was during his reign that the temple at Lepakshi was constructed. Achyuta raya made lavish gifts to Brahmins. The records of his gifts were often surmounted by a figure of Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu. In 1539 he established a kind of bank for the benefit of Brahmins called *ananda nidhi*.

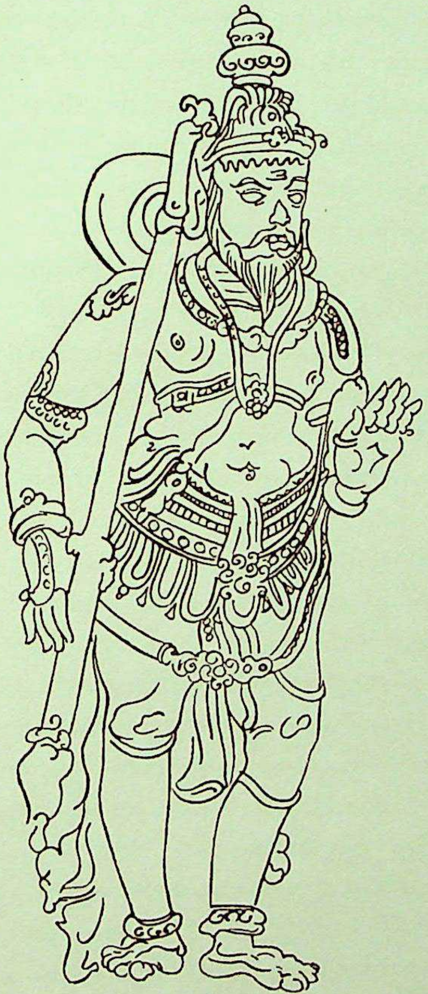
Achyuta deva raya's son, an infant, Venkatapati deva maha raya was crowned the emperor in or about 1542 A.D. In 1543 Sadasiva raya was raised to the throne by the great minister Rama raja. Sadasiva raya was the son of Ranga raya, the deceased brother of Achyuta deva raya by the same mother. But Sadasiva raya was only an emperor in name, for the entire administration was carried on by the minister Rama raja and the counsellors. Rama raja was also a great warrior and general of the armies of the empire. He put down several rebellions and brought the whole land into subjugation. But due to his extreme arrogance, all the four neighbouring Mussalman states of Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmad Nagar and Bidar were provoked. They all combined in an attack on Vijayanagar as their common enemy. In the famous battle of Talikota near Raichur on 23rd January, 1565, Rama raja was slain, upon which the immense Hindu army fled in panic. The Mussalman armies then entered the city of Vijayanagar. The city was not only mercilessly sacked, but completely destroyed; every building and separate construction was torn and razed ruthlessly. Not even the architectural and sculptural wonders were spared. This unparalleled ruthless vandalism and destruction went on for a continuous period of nearly six months.

But the Royal family escaped to Penukonda. Sadasiva raya continued to be the emperor in name for a further period of six years, and ruled the empire from Penukonda as the seat. Then in 1571 A.D. Tirumala raya, brother of Rama raja, grabbed the throne. He started what is known as the Aravidu dynasty, which also had six kings in succession. But not all of them ruled from Penukonda. In 1585, the seat of the now dwindled empire was shifted to Chandragiri in the south, and later to Chengelpet further south. The line eventually merged with that of the chiefs of Anegondi, who were subdued by Tippu sultan.

This, in short, is the history of the Vijayanagar empire and its emperors. But the empire's glorious period was from its inception in 1336 A.D. to the great battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D., when the city of Vijayanagar fell. Though the emperors continued as the direct descendants of the last dynasty, they existed but in name and neither wielded power nor achieved anything material. Whatever was achieved in art, literature or architecture was done only during the period from its inception until the battle of Talikota and the destruction of the city of Vijayanagar in 1565.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGION



NARADA

India is a land of several races, languages and religions as it is a land of many climates. Perhaps there were only a few cults like those of Pasupati, and of tree goddesses, practised in the prehistoric times. Later during the *Vedic* period Aryans worshipped gods like Indra, Agni, Mitra, Varuna and Aryaman, and their religious expression mostly took the form of *yagnas*. The sixth century B.C. saw the birth of two great religions, Jainism and Buddhism, which became popular and were followed by many during the later centuries.

The age of the *Puranas* saw the development of Vaishnavism, Saivism and even Saktaism. All these had several off shoots and each of them developed its own form, cult, doctrine, philosophy and mythology. Gradually, every one of them was shaped into a different religion with distinct form and personality. Votaries of every religion tried to establish the superiority of their particular cult and philosophy over the rest. This very often took the form of convincing the king or the head of the state into adopting the particular cult or religion, which then automatically became the religion of the state.

So, by about the 11th century A.D., India became a land of innumerable religions, living side by side and vying with one another, though all were but branches of Hinduism. They all had much in common yet little agreement existed. Though there was intense religious rivalry, there generally existed an atmosphere of religious tolerance throughout the subcontinent, for religious tolerance was a philosophy taught and nurtured by the spirit of the land itself, where different and opposing climates existed side by side. All religions are but different paths leading to the one God absolute, and so each person can choose the path according to his taste and conscience. Bickerings and quarrels had no purpose but there were times when religious bigotry and intolerance showed their heads up. During such periods religious animosities ran high, and there were severe and violent, even cruel persecutions. Though such instances are rare in Indian history, they did exist.

The entrance and settling of the Mussalmans in India about the end of the 12th century A.D. gave an unexpected new turn to the religious life of the country. The early Mussalman was a declared, uncompromising enemy of all the religions except Islam, and an iconoclast. Once the Mussalmans firmly established themselves as masters of a part of India, they dug their roots deep into the soil and Islam became the religion of the state. They could not tolerate any religion but Islam. They did not distinguish between the several cults of Hinduism, Jainism or Buddhism. All of them were idolaters and *Kafirs,* and must be converted or exterminated. The Hindus resisted them on all fronts. But the tides of Mussalman invasion and intolerance knew no bounds.

By 1330 A.D. the whole of northern India came firmly under the Moslem rule, and the Mussalmans overran nearly the whole of Dekhan. The south was also being threatened with the same fate. South of the Krishna, the whole country was still under Hindu domination. Yet everything seemed to be leading to one inevitable end, the ruin and devastation of all Hindu states, the annihilation of all Hindu royal houses, the destruction of the Hindu religion, with all the temples, *maths* and institutions. All that the Hindus in the south cherished, seemed to be tottering and ready to fall.

Suddenly there arose a check to this flood of foreign menace. This was caused by a combination of small Hindu states, Warangal, Dwarasamudra and Anegondi. Out of this grew the sturdy wall of Vijayanagar empire which stood the onslaughts of Moslem invasions from the north and stemmed the tide of devastation. Most of the small kingdoms of south India rallied under the single banner of Vijayanagar, and acknowledged the emperor as their supreme lord to save their territories as much as their religious institutions. It was true, there were several rebellions within the empire during the long history of Vijayanagar, and they had to be curbed with a strong hand. But such rebellions never affected the run and solidarity of the empire. It was nearly a federation of the Hindu states from the beginning to the fall of the empire.

It was in the same spirit the religious policy of the emperors of Vijayanagar was founded. It was to stem the tide of Mussalman invasion and to protect the Hindu religion and tradition that the empire was founded. So the house of Vijayanagar did not want the empire to be weakened by religious dissensions or sectarian rivalries and disputes. Earlier, south India saw religious animosities and even persecutions of a severe character. Jains were being systematically persecuted by Hindus in several states. And even among Hindus, Vaishnavas and Saivas did not agree with each other. One sect tried to dominate the other whenever it got into power.

The house of Vijayanagar put an end to this state of affairs in matters of religion, for such a state would have spelt disaster not only to the empire but also to Hinduism as a whole. Perhaps this was very much due either to the influence of Madhavacharya or to Vidyaranya Sripada, the eminent *Advaita* philosopher who was also the first minister of the new empire.

The emperors followed a liberal and universalist policy in all matters of religion not known in the medieval times. The early emperors had the figure of *varaha* on their crest, while their family deity was Virupaksha, one form of Siva. These emperors built temples for both Siva and Vishnu; and extended their patronage of Jains and even Moslems. They were against all kinds of religious strife and did not suffer one sect to persecute another.

After a quarrel between the Vaishnavas and the Jains, Bukka raya laid down the religious policy of the state in a royal edict. Like Asoka he got copies of the edict engraved on stones and placed them all over. The text of the edict is as follows:

"The Jains of all the *nads* of Anegondi, Hosapattana, Penukonda and Kalyana made petitions to him (Bukka raya) that the *bhaktas* (Vaishnavas) were unjustly killing them. The king thereupon summoned before him representatives of the Sri Vaishnavas of eighteen *nads,* including *acharyas* of Kovil, Tirunarayanapuram, with other members of the sect, that he would not countenance their unjust proceedings against the Jains or allow themselves to shelter under the plea of religion, passed the following decree, that to the Jains the use of certain musical instruments customary among them was to be confined to the five *bastis* and disallowed in others."

In one version of the edict it is said that there was no difference between the Vaishnava and Jain *darsanas*. Bukka raya also summoned the leaders and the *gurus* of both the sects to the *durbar,* and took the hand of the Jain leader, placed it in the hand of the Vaishnava *guru* and ordained that they should pursue their own religious practices in freedom and peace.

This act of Bukka raya and this edict laid down the fundamental principles on which the religious policy of the state was to be based. Before the state all religions were equal. The spirit of this edict was well understood, liberally interpreted and wisely followed by the later monarchs of Vijayanagar, and included within its scope all the creeds current in the land including Islam. The neighbouring Moslem rulers neither understood nor pursued such a liberal religious policy. Yet there is no record of Vijayanagar emperors illtreating their Moslem subjects. This liberal and universalist attitude of the emperors was not passive indifference, but a positive act towards the consolidation of their empire. They extended their patronage even to the Moslem religious institutions. Deva raya II built a mosque in his capital for the benefit of his Mussalman soldiers. The policy which the Vijayanagar state followed in religious matters was to secure the concord of all religions within the empire.

Krishna deva raya, the greatest of Vijayanagar emperors, allowed perfect liberty and freedom of religion to all his subjects. He was a Vaishnava, yet he showed considerable regard and respect to the Jain religion. He rebuilt the Virupaksha temple at Hampi, the capital. He made several gifts to the Vaishnava and Saiva temples. Even the Jains found in him a monarch who gave them full protection. Once, during his reign, a bigoted Saiva chief called Santalinga massacred several *swetambara* Jain priests to pave his way to *Kailasa,* the Saivaite heaven. Krishna deva raya did not like this. On his command, Gani Timma nayudu, a Velugoti chief, attacked the Saiva chief and slew him. The Hindus were not the only people who reaped benefits of the liberal religious policy of Vijayanagar emperors. As Barbosa said, the king allowed such freedom that every man could live according to his own creed without suffering any annoyance and without any enquiry whether he be a Christian, a Jew or even a Mohammedan.

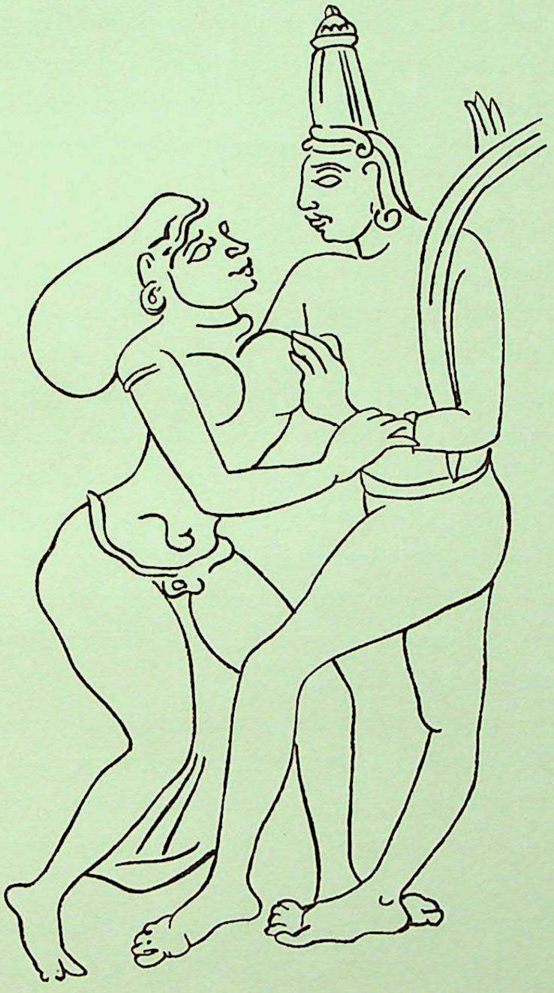
The religious policy of Krishna deva raya was continued unaltered by Achyuta deva raya. Like his brother, he made gifts to Brahmins of all sects. He did not show any partiality to the temples of Vishnu, though he was a Vaishnavite. Temples of Siva as well as temples of Vishnu were enriched with his gifts. During his period too a spirit of tolerance pervaded the people of Vijayanagar.

The famous Rama raja went still further. He was also a Vaishnava by profession. Yet he continued the same patronage as his predecessors to Saivites, Jains, Moslems and others. In order to recognise his Moslem captains and soldiers in the act of saluting him, he caused a copy of the *Koran* to be placed before him when they came to pay their respects. This liberal policy of Rama raja did not go unopposed. On one occasion the Moslems of the city sacrificed a few cows in their mosques. Several nobles and officers were excited over the matter. Through Tirumala raya, they made representation to the emperor exhorting him to prohibit Moslems from slaughtering cows. Rama raja did not at all yield to them. He said he was only the master of the bodies of his soldiers and subjects and not of their souls. Even his opponents were convinced in the wisdom of those words and the religious policy of the emperor.

Thus the Vijayanagar emperors consistently followed a liberal and universalist policy regarding matters of religion much in advance of their times. It was the only state in the world during those dark medieval times, which could conceive and follow such a policy. Perhaps, it was forced upon them by the onrushing menace from the north; but today we can only wonder that a kind of universalism in matters of religion could be conceived and fully realised in the Vijayanagar empire during those dark days, when religious bigotry, fanaticism and intolerance were the laws rather than the exceptions.

CHAPTER V

THE LEGEND



MITHUNA

The legend of the Lepakshi temple is rooted in antiquity. It is built on a hillock known as Kurmasaila, or the hill of the tortoise. As to when this rock acquired this name is not known. But Agastya, a *rishi* and reputed author of several hymns in the *Rigveda,* is said to have built a small shrine at Kurmasaila. Later it became one of the Saiva *kshetras,* in south India. There is a mention of this place in the *Scanda purana* as one of the hundred and eight important Saiva *kshetras* in India and was called Papanaseswara *kshetra.*

The present structure is said to be the work of two brothers, Virupanna and Veeranna, sons of Nandi Lakka setti and that they erected this structure during the reign of Achyuta deva raya, who ruled the Vijayanagar empire from 1530 to 1542 A.D. There is an interesting legend current about the brothers, Virupanna and Veeranna, and the erection of this great temple complex.

Virupanna was one of the treasurers of Achyuta deva raya and once happened to see Papanaseswaralaya on Kurmasaila, an insignificant structure then. He was excited and decided to build a great temple there. Immediately he engaged famous architects, sculptors and painters. He used the funds of the imperial treasury for the material and workmen. First he got a great compound wall enclosing the several small shrines on the sacred spot and erected large *mantapas* within. Meanwhile, envious tongues reported to the emperor that the funds of his treasury were being embezzled and the treasure was in danger of being exhausted.

The emperor was in a rage and ordered Virupanna to his presence. It was an established custom of the period to pluck the eyes of the keeper of the royal treasury, guilty of theft or embezzlement. So Virupanna anticipated the royal decree, plucked both his eye balls himself and flung them at the wall of the temple.

Even today two close red spots, just as close as the eyes of a human being, can be seen on the western wall of the temple. During the rainy season, as water infiltrates through the walls, these red spots are seen watering. And people say *"Lo! Virupanna is weeping."* It is said that blinded, Virupanna used to wander about the unfinished temple constantly, despairing that fate was cruel and did not allow him to complete the work and that he could not view the glory of this God of the temple which he himself had erected.

There are four portraits, said to be of Virupanna among the paintings and sculptures of this temple. One painting identified as a portrait of Virupanna is in the *antarala,* adjacent to the large painting of Veerabhadra. The second one is that of Virupanna blinded, painted on the front architrave of the *artha mantapa.* The third one is a large painting of the brothers, Virupanna and Veeranna together with their families, on one of the eastern panels of the *mukha mantapa.* The fourth one is a sculptural representation of Virupanna on a front pillar of the *mukha mantapa.*

There are several inscriptions on this temple but none of them date the construction. All the inscriptions are dated between the years 1453 and 1471 of the *Saka* era, i.e. between the years 1530 and 1548 A.D. and are about gifts of land and villages to the temple of Veerabhadra at Lepakshi. Many donations were by Virupanna. But none of the inscriptions are in support of this legend.

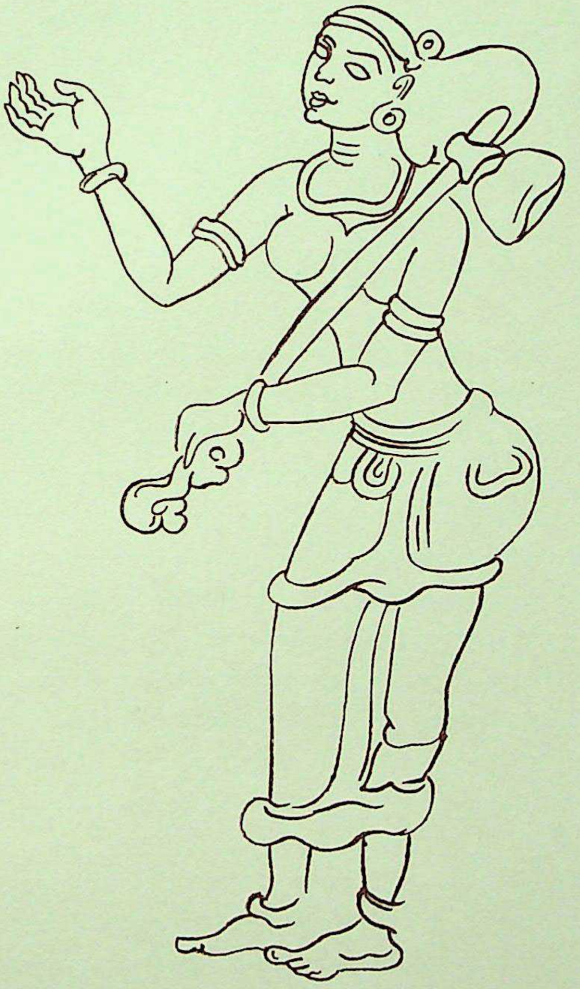
One inscription on the rocky floor at the foot of the east wall of the second *prakara,* mentions that the emperor of Vijayanagar, Achyuta deva raya, by a royal order to the *gaudas* of Cheluvindla, that the king made a gift of Cheluvindla, surnamed Kumara Venkatadriyapura, to the God Papanaseswara, and Gunapatihalli to Virupanna of Penukonda and that the ownership of both the villages was given to the latter. This inscription is dated 1531 A.D. during the second year of Achyuta deva raya's reign. From this inscription it is evident that Achyuta deva raya was neither averse to the construction of the temple nor antagonistic to Virupanna. But the inscription was made at the beginning of Achyuta deva raya's reign and the blinding of Virupanna might have occurred during the later part of the emperor's reign.

However, inscriptions on this temple do not give a clue as to when the construction of the temple began or ended. The last inscription was dated *Saka* 1471 or 1548 A.D. The reign of Achyuta deva raya ended in 1542 A.D. So the construction might have continued even into the reign of Venkatapati deva maharaya, the successor of Achyuta deva raya. Perhaps, it was carried on even to the day of the fall of Vijayanagar in 1565 A.D. when it might have been abandoned abruptly.

The style of architecture, sculpture and painting suggests that this great unfinished work belonged to the age of Vijayanagar during its wane, for the hurry in which the execution was carried out is apparent in every part of the great temple which is a veritable treasure of Vijayanagar art.

CHAPTER VI

THE TEMPLE AND THE ARCHITECTURE



VEENAPANI

The temple is situated on the roadside nine miles east of Hindupur town in Anantapur District in Andhra Pradesh. It was originally dedicated to Veerabhadra, a fierce form of Siva, but now mainly worship of Devi is carried on there.

This large temple complex is built on a huge uneven rock, Kurmasaila. The name must have been originally suggested by the shape of the rock itself, a low hillock with almost a flat top, its form conforming to that of a resting tortoise. The uneven nature of this huge rock seems to have influenced the architecture of this temple. The construction varies according to the levels at different places and the whole structure undulates with the surface movement of the rock. Further, the position of several huge boulders was taken advantage of and they serve the purpose of walls at places. Thus the temple acquires a distinct character.

The temple is sorrounded by a huge outer enclosure, which is only a pillared cloister. This great cloister today practically houses the entire village. A second inner enclosure sorrounds the main part of this huge temple complex and is a high wall of cut granite stones. On the top of this wall, at regular intervals, are miniature *gopuras,* more as part of a decorative design than to serve any architectural purpose. This enclosure is entered through an enormous gateway with the usual *gopura* in Pallava style. The gateway is built of huge cut granite rocks without the use of cement. The *gopura* on the top was built of burnt bricks and plastered with lime. It collapsed in about 1903 and had not any architectural value. It was a shrunk, atrophied form of old glorious *gopuras,* and only a few metres high. Evidently, it was constructed in the waning period of Vijayanagar when *gopuras* and *vimanas* began to get shrunk and atrophied.

The sculptures on the *gopura* are also in brick and lime and are worth notice. The artisan of the period could achieve permanent and plastic form of aesthetic values even in this difficult medium. But the iconography of these sculptures cannot be determined with any certainty as they are mostly rubbed out of form by both exposure and neglect. They are all now almost indistinguishable.

Another peculiarity is that it does not have a prominent *vimana* on the sanctum which most of the south Indian temples have. But it has many *vimana*-like structures on top of the temple, indicating the several separate cells of gods housed in this huge temple complex. They lend character and impart a sense of balance and stability to the whole structure. Like the *gopuras* they are also built of brick and lime and no sculptures decorate them. They have a dilapidated look but retain their original form.

The second enclosure is nearly square and well oriented; with the principal gateway in the north it has two more, one to the east and one to the west and are now closed with brick and rubble.

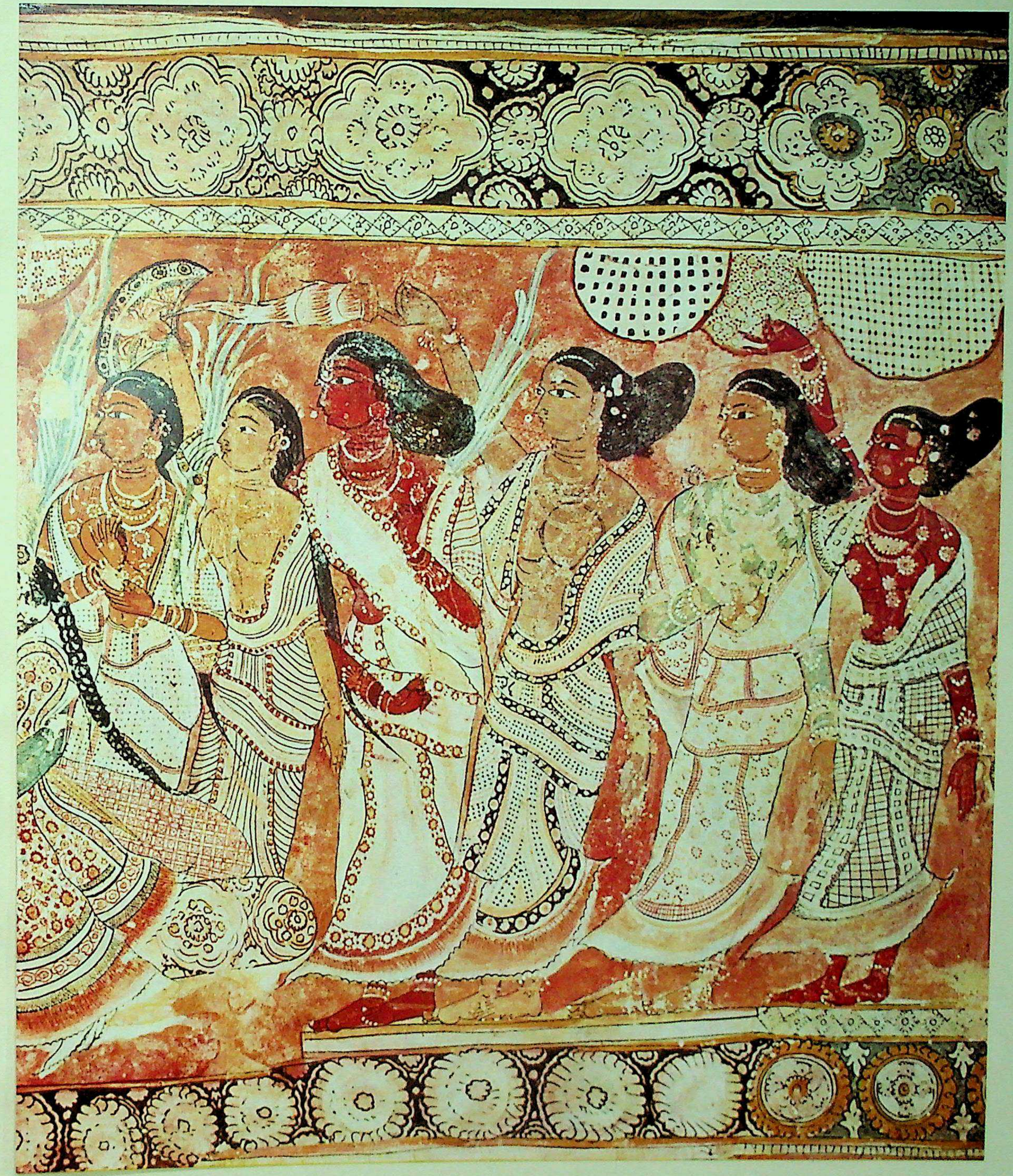
Along this inner enclosure which undulates with the surface movement of the rock, runs a cloister about seven feet wide and eleven feet high. It was raised on a plinth, whose height varies with the level of the rock.

The roof of this cloister is made up of huge slabs of granite placed across. They are supported throughout, by three rows of pillars about nine feet high all along the cloister. The front row of pillars is both composite and monolithic in the Vijayanagar style and supports the horizontal beams about two feet thick on the capitals, on which rest the blocks of granite that form the rock. The rest of the two rows, one running in the centre, and another along the wall close to it, are also monoliths which have not lost their original Pallava character. It seems the entire ceiling was originally painted and only a few faint traces of it are left.

A third enclosure of high plain wall encircles the main body of the temple. Evidently this was not completed. The portion on the west is left unbuilt. Three gateways were originally designed for this enclosure. The one to the north was done elaborately. It is high and imposing with many carvings of late Vijayanagar style. The gateway to the south is plain and unadorned but impressive with its massiveness. The gateway to the west stands bare and isolated, without walls on either side supporting it. The arch on this gateway is worth noticing. It is an ogee arch of post and lintel construction in the manner of all the other Hindu arches of the period.

The main body of the temple is in three distinct parts: the *mukha mantapa,* also called *natya mantapa* or *ranga mantapa,* the body of the temple proper which consists of *artha mantapa* and *garbha griha;* and the *kalyana mantapa*. The *mukha mantapa* and the body of the temple proper are welded into one structure, but the *kalyana mantapa* stands separate and has the appearance of an appendage. It is an auxiliary structure to the west of the main body of the temple and is left unfinished. Only the carved plinth is raised and many monolithic pillars of sandstone are fixed in positions. Some of them support the horizontal slabs of stone, giving the impression that the construction of a roof was begun but abandoned before it could be finished. Many highly finished sculptures are present on them. They retain the sharpness of the original carving.

The entrance to the *mukha mantapa* is effected by a huge gateway in the third inner enclosure, not exactly in line with the main entrance of the second enclosure. It is slightly shifted to the west. This is an unusual feature in temple architecture. Perhaps, the shape and formation of the rock dictated even this



Pl. IV. MAIDS IN ATTENDANCE OF PARVATI : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

deviation from the normal principles of temple architecture.

This gateway is of the usual post and lintel construction but the flanking posts are enormous monolithic blocks of granite carved and sculptured in the best of Vijayanagar style. On them we see *Ganga* and *Yamuna* dancing motifs, complete with ornamental foliage in low relief. Here again, there is deviation. Usually *Ganga* is sculptured as standing on *makara,* a mythical composite water animal and *Yamuna* as standing on *kurma,* for they both are traditional *vahanas* of these goddesses. But on these posts both are portrayed as standing on *makaras*. Evidently, the sculptor was interested in the purely aesthetic values and plastic approach, rather than in iconographic detail, for both these sculptures have refinement, grace, movement and plasticity not easily surpassed in any of the south Indian sculptures of the period. Refinement and grace in these two sculptures are achieved by an elongation of form, subtle abstraction and an undulating movement. There is also an internal movement apparent, running through them, making them aware and alive.

The *mukha mantapa* is erected on a high plinth. A stone staircase leads into it from the *Ganga-Yamuna* gateway. The eastern face of the plinth is carved. It is the only side where it has the necessary height which could permit carving. This *mantapa* is an oblong structure eighty feet by fortyfour feet, of imposing height, supported by seventy excellently sculptured monolithic pillars of granite. The columns of the central group bear nearly lifesize representations of celestial musicians and dancers, carved with spirit and freedom. The outer rows of pillars are about sixty, with well executed sculptures of a much smaller scale than those on the central group. Unfortunately, the sculptures on the central pillars have been defaced with washes of red and white paint.

All the pillars of this *mantapa* do not belong to the same order. Three different types of pillars can be observed in this large audience hall. The central group of ten pillars appears to belong to a single order. Yet every one of them seems to bear a character of its own, and all their cross sections do not conform to a single geometrical form. This difference in their shapes is imposed by the forms of the several dancing deities presented on them. They are heavy and well suited to bear the weight of the sculptured, heavy, entirely lithic dome which they support. Among the sorrounding sixty pillars, fiftysix are of the conventional Pallava type modified to the Vijayanagar style. They are all square blocks of stone, with hexagonal shapes, carved in them at intervals. The remaining four pillars, two at the eastern end and two at the western end, present a different character. They have a touch of the Jain temple architecture of the period. They are not square as the rest of the pillars, but nearly round in shape with the *stupa* and other abstract designs carved on them.

This would not be noticed, since the sculptures presented on them take away all our attention. Two of the pillars in this *mantapa* have only one corner resting on the ground. The local tradition asserts that they were originally built as hanging pillars and that time and neglect brought them low down. One cannot help wondering how the architect could make the roof support such huge and heavy monolithic columns.

This *mantapa* is an open and plain structure. Monolithic pillars of 12.75 feet height are placed at regular intervals and stone beams of about 1.5 feet thickness are placed horizontally over them. The ceiling is formed of huge slabs of hard granite resting on the beams. It has a height of about 14.25 feet and is imposing. But at the centre rises a dome to a height of 21 feet. It is an elaborately carved rosette with the figures of several gods supporting it. It is the great *padma* of the heaven where gods make love and sport.

This *mantapa* is remarkable for its painting all over the ceiling, most of which still remains fresh. The ceiling is divided into different panels for painting by the very beams that support it. In total there are eleven painted panels, four of which are the sides of a square that run around the central dome. Six panels run north and south, three on either side of the central square. But one panel nearest the *Ganga-Yamuna* gateway runs east-west across the entire ceiling to a length of about sixty and a half feet and three and a half feet width. This can be said to be the longest and narrowest panel as most of the other panels that run across the ceiling are not more than thirtyseven feet in length, but they are wider and not of uniform width, the widest of them being five feet. This may not be considered a defect in the architecture, considering the time of its construction and the hurry which characterise it.

This huge *mantapa* is flanked by two minor ones built at a lower level than the *mukha mantapa,* one to the east and one to the west. Both are closed *mantapas* open only to the south. They are about nine feet high, fifty feet in length, sixteen feet wide. They must have served once to house pilgrims, but now they serve only to emphasize the sense of balance in the structure. Their architecture is not remarkable. No sculptures of note adorn them. Their ceilings were originally painted but the painting has entirely disappeared and a few traces can be discerned by a discriminating connoisseur.

The *mukha mantapa* is indeed rich with painting and sculpture. Though a large part of the painting is lost, there is still much to see. Nothing is remarkable about its architecture, except the unusual, imposing height.

The body of the temple proper adjoins the *mukha mantapa* and is built on high plinth about two feet nine inches above the floor level of the *mukha mantapa,* which is also necessitated by the shape of the rock. The roof of the forepart of the body of the temple proper is only eleven feet and four inches high above the plinth, built to bring its ceiling in level with that of the *mukha mantapa*. This makes it less imposing, yet serves to impart a sense of unity to the whole structure. There is a sense of continuity established between the two separate structures, the *mukha mantapa* and the body of the temple proper.

The body of the temple proper is constructed in two conjoined parts, the *artha mantapa* and the *garbha griha*. The *artha mantapa,* originally a cloister, is now a narrow transverse corridor connecting the *mukha mantapa* with the body of the temple proper. It runs east-west, bending in right angles at both the ends. Two rows of pillars run along this corridor, one of them almost touching the front wall of the *garbha griha*. At places, these pillars cover the relief sculptures on the wall. This might also have been added as an after thought.

The *artha mantapa* is remarkable for both its paintings and the relief sculptures adorning the wall. As in the *mukha mantapa* the paintings are on the ceiling. The reliefs run in three continuous bands. The top band consists of several *hamsas* running in a row. The lowest band is that of elephants. The middle band illustrates two important stories from Saivaite literature. In the left part is carved the famous story of Siriyala and the right illustrates the story of *Kiratarjuneeya,* a famous episode from the *Mahabharata*.

The body of the temple proper is enclosed on all sides, by walls built of huge blocks of granite in diaper fashion. The entrance is a stone doorway now covered.

The temple proper consists of a 'L' shaped hall, and eight separate cells called *sukanasis,* of which seven house different icons. The central part is the main hall and raised to a height of fifteen feet four inches. It does not have the usual carved dome, but a flat roof on which the famous figure of Veerabhadra is painted.

This hall is supported by sixteen heavy monolithic granite pillars in the Vijayanagar style. Many of the pillars have lifesize figures of gods and goddesses sculptured on them. The pillar in the northeast corner has the figure of Mahishasura mardani carved and it is today the main object of worship in the temple.

The centre cell is occupied by a lifesize icon of Veerabhadra. To its left are the cells of Papanaseswara or the lord who annihilates sins, and Parvati. There is another cell in continuation which remains empty. A corridor running in between the cells of Papanaseswara and Parvati is now called *sayanagara*. This *sayanagara* is flanked by a huge natural boulder, instead of a built wall. The architects of the temple complex had taken advantage of not only the surface of the rock, but every boulder that existed on it. Some of the remarkable paintings of the temple are to be seen here. Behind the *sayanagara,* there is yet a darker cave-like cell called the cell of Agastya.

Around the cell of Veerabhadra, a narrow corridor is constructed. It is the *pradakshinapatha* or perambulatory walk. Even this corridor is completely painted, and some paintings still remain bright and beautiful.

To the western side are three cells directly opposing the cells on the left. The centre cell houses an icon of Kali. The southernmost cell contains a *linga* called Ramalinga, and the one to the north of Kali contains another *linga* called Hanumllinga. There is a small *nandi* resting in front of the cell of Ramalinga.

To the left of the Hanumllinga cell is a closed corridor of six pillars, four of which are carved. This corridor leads to the cell of Raghunatha. The corridor and the cell together are called Raghunathalaya. The ceiling of the Raghunathalaya is painted with figures of *avataras* of Vishnu of which seven still exist.

Perhaps, originally seven small temples of different deities like Veerabhadra, Papanaseswara, Parvati, Ramalinga, Kali, Hanumllinga and Raghunatheswara existed on Kurmasaila. Probably Virupanna saw them and was inspired to build this huge temple complex. For, the body of the temple proper has no definite plan and does not conform to the rules of architecture. There is also a narrow cloister behind, attached to this. This too was originally painted. Today only a few traces of the painting can be discerned. Evidently this is an appended structure with no functional value.

The temple does not have a central dome or any dominating *vimana* crowning it. Several small atrophied *vimana* forms mark the different positions of the various cells on the flat top of the temple. The interior has no definite plan of its own, and is clumsily constructed to accommodate the many cells of these gods and goddesses. It is badly lighted and remains dark inside and can be viewed only with the help of powerful artificial light. Perhaps, the darkness was intended and planned, for it gives a sense of mystery which is essential to all religions with esoteric sections.

Within the second enclosure, to the south of the main shrine, is a huge Nagalinga eighteen feet high. The *linga* is shaded by a huge seven-hooded cobra. All this is cut out of a single rock. The *linga* with its *panuvatta* and the seven-hooded cobra, stands on a massive uncut stone, which is also a part of this gigantic monolithic sculpture. This base is split almost at the centre. There is a local legend current about this split in the base. It seems this great monolithic sculpture was carved by one of the workmen of the temple during the rest hours, while his mother got his food ready. On arriving with his meal she was surprised to see the huge sculpture. She gave expression to her feelings at once whereon the rockbase split itself. A mother's verbal praise of the son has always been held inauspicious in India.

To the west of Nagalinga is a huge boulder on which is carved the legend of *Kalahasti* in very low relief. Three separate *lingas* are carved, each worshipped by an elephant, a spider and the hunter Kannappa. This sculpture does not disturb the character and shape of the rock. It was not intended to express the feelings of the artist but to relate the story. Hence their carving is in very low relief, and they appear in the manner of outline drawings on rock.

Adjoining this, there is another huge boulder on which a figure of Ganapati on his carrier-mouse is carved. It is a large, impressive figure of about seven and a half feet height. The plinth, on which Ganesa is placed, is four feet eight inches high. So, the figure of Ganesa rises to almost twelve feet in height and becomes impressive by its sheer massiveness. The figure of Ganesa is partly coloured and the colouring is cheap and vulgar. Perhaps, the colour was added by some enthusiasts with no taste or talent much later. Except for the colouring the sculpture is not at all out of taste. It is in right proportions and has excellent finish.

To the west of the main structure of the temple is the *kalyana mantapa*. It is an open structure and unfinished, built on a high plinth which rises to five and a half feet on the northern side. This is entirely due to the uneven surface of the rock to which the entire structure is adapted. Only the plinth is carved and the pillars erected, but the roof is not finished. Perhaps conditions arose during its construction which led to the abandonment, though begun well.

The northern facade of the plinth of the *kalyana mantapa* has very interesting sculpture. The plinth itself is derived from Chalukyan architecture but it is not star-shaped as in Chalukyan temples. It was the Chalukyas who started building temple structures on raised and carved plinths. The sculptures on the facade of this plinth follow the Hoyasala style. Parallel strings of sculptures with foliage, animal and bird motifs project and recede rhythmically. The sculptures have faultless form, good finish and full rounded figures like the forms in Hoyasala sculptures. The influence of both, Chalukyan and Hoyasala is seen throughout this temple. Wherever the height permitted the face of the plinth is carved well.

The *kalyana mantapa* has thirtyeight carved monolithic pillars of gray sandstone. This is in accordance with the principles of temple architecture laid down in the Pallava *rathas* at Mahabalipuram. The base should be of hard granite, the middle part of the structure should be of softer sandstone, and the super structure of the *vimana* should be of brick and mortar. All these pillars belong to the Pallava order, evolved by history to Vijayanagar style, and are profusely carved. Even here the order is as in the *mukha mantapa*. The central group of pillars has lifesize carvings of gods, deities and *rishis*. The outer flanking pillars are all carved with smaller figures of human beings, animals, birds and geometrical patterns. The fiction is that the *kalyana mantapa* is the spot where Siva and Parvati are married and gods, goddesses, deities and *rishis* arrive here to attend the celestial function. Human beings, animals and birds which belong to the lower orders too follow them.

Here we see lifesize sculptures of gods like Vishnu, Siva, Brahma, Indra, Varuna, Vayu, Dhanvantari, Ganapati, Agni and Nandi; goddesses like Parvati, and many *rishis; Rajarishis* and *Brahmarishis,* including Narada can be distinguished by the manner of their hair dressings. *Rajarishis* have the *jatamakuta,* like a crown, whereas *Brahmarishis* have their hair tied up in transverse knots above their foreheads. The gods and goddesses can be distinguished by their traditional iconographic symbols.

The western part of the *kalyana mantapa* is called the *lata mantapa* or hall of creepers. This is made up of fortytwo pillars standing in four parallel rows. This part of the *mantapa* is entirely covered with slabs of stone. These pillars are erected with an architectural scheme. Different designs of flower and stalk motifs, and abstract geometrical patterns cover them. Perhaps, the architect wanted to suggest that this was a garden where Siva and Parvati married, to witness which great event all the gods and goddesses, lords of quarters, *rishis* and the rest of the beings of the world had arrived.

In keeping with this idea only several other figures are carved in a smaller scale on the outer rows of the *kalyana mantapa* pillars. Many of them are forms of players of musical instruments, dancers and acrobats. Animals and bird forms are also added. These are all carved in a small scale in keeping with the age-old tradition that important personnel should be represented in a larger scale than the humble personnel. All these figures are about fifteen inches high, yet carved with great freedom and spirit. A stunning realism is present in all these carvings. There is abstraction; all figures, large and small, answer to the fiction of the *kalyana mantapa*. Every living and celestial being is there to witness and participate in the holy wedding of Siva and Parvati.

To the east of the *kalyana mantapa,* there is a tall *mantapa* standing on a high plinth with a relief sculpture of Hanuman installed in it. Perhaps, this is a later appendage as it has neither architectural nor functional relationship with the temple.

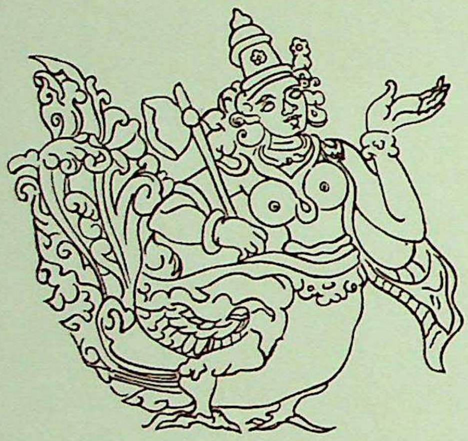
In front of the *kalyana mantapa,* to the northeast is a small pond and is a natural formation of the rock on this small hillock, where rain water collects in season. This formation is taken advantage of by the architect and a semblance of architecture is added to the pond by the erection of a low wall around it.

To the northeast of the temple, about a furlong off, lies the famous colossal bull of Lepakshi. It was carved out of a huge boulder and is a remarkable piece of work not by its size alone. The quality of the carving is astounding. It is of excellent proportions and is realistic. Even the chains hanging around the neck and the body of the bull are carved in detail and with precision. There is a figure of the *ganda bherunda,* bearing an elephant in its claws, hanging as a pendant to one of the chains round the neck. *Ganda bherunda* is a mythical bird and insignia of the imperial house of Vijayanagar. The *ganda bherunda* has a strange history. It first appeared in Takshasila, later as the insignia of the imperial house of Vijayanagar.

It is a matter of wonder that the carving retains its original sharpness even after the lapse of centuries and the look of having been carved recently. This must be due to the hard quality of the stone. It is nearly twentyseven feet in length and fifteen feet in height, and the largest monolithic bull carving in India. No worship is done to it. Perhaps it was never intended for that. It is said, like the monolith of Nagalinga, this bull was also carved by a party of workmen in their leisure hours.

CHAPTER VII

THE ICONOGRAPHY



KINNARA

We would naturally expect the temple at Lepakshi to strictly conform to the traditional laws and principles of the canonical texts in matters of design, construction and other iconographical details because it was built during those times when the religious feelings of the Hindus ran high and they were actually fighting hard to retain their cherished traditions and religious forms. The builders of Lepakshi were certainly well versed in the several treatises on architecture and iconography that defined rules of temple construction and iconographic details and the forms of gods and goddesses that filled them. This is amply evidenced by the temple and several sculptures and paintings present there. In spite of this we find, though a few, surprising deviations from the traditional forms and practices. These are apparent only to a critical eye and are so designed and presented that they least offend the tradition and traditional form but at the same time are no less revolutionary.

To a Hindu, the temple is to house a god or goddess as the human body to the *jiva* or spirit. It is also the microcosm, a miniature reflection of the macrocosm and in itself the visible and tangible form of the god housed in it. So it becomes an icon by itself, and as many rules regulate its design, plan and structure as the form of a god or goddess to the Hindu sculptor.*

In all these temples, arrangements and grouping of structures do not conform strictly to architectural order. Yet order is present there. This order is dictated by several rituals and ceremonies and the whole temple is a sum total of all such ceremonies connected with the planning, erection, and completion of the structure of the temple and all those that are to follow. They are so constructed that all gates that lead to the sanctuary are towards east and it is important that the first rays of the sun should fall on the *linga*. Even for *gopuras* there are rules laid down. The principal one is to the east and another must be to the south. The entrances from north and west are optional.

The design and ground plan of the Lepakshi temple is certainly not according to tradition. Perhaps, it was dictated by the formation of the rock on which it was constructed. It could also be partly due to the irrepressible urge of the builders to adopt themselves to the hurry in which Vijayanagar empire and its people were reconstructing their tottering religious edifice. Indeed the hurry is apparent not only in the architecture but also in the sculptures and paintings that adorn it. Normally no Hindu architect would think of deviating from the established order regarding the design and erection of the temple, lest it may not gain the required sanctity and power. Yet, there were deviations and there was progress.

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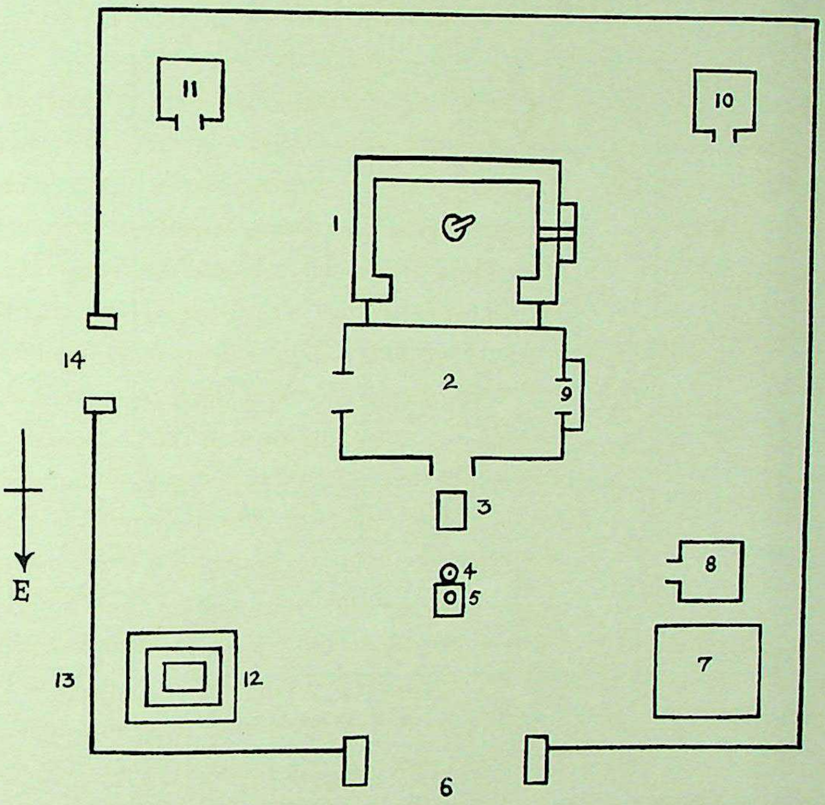
*The traditional plan of a simple Saiva temple is on p. 57.

TRADITIONAL PLAN OF A SIMPLE SAIVA TEMPLE

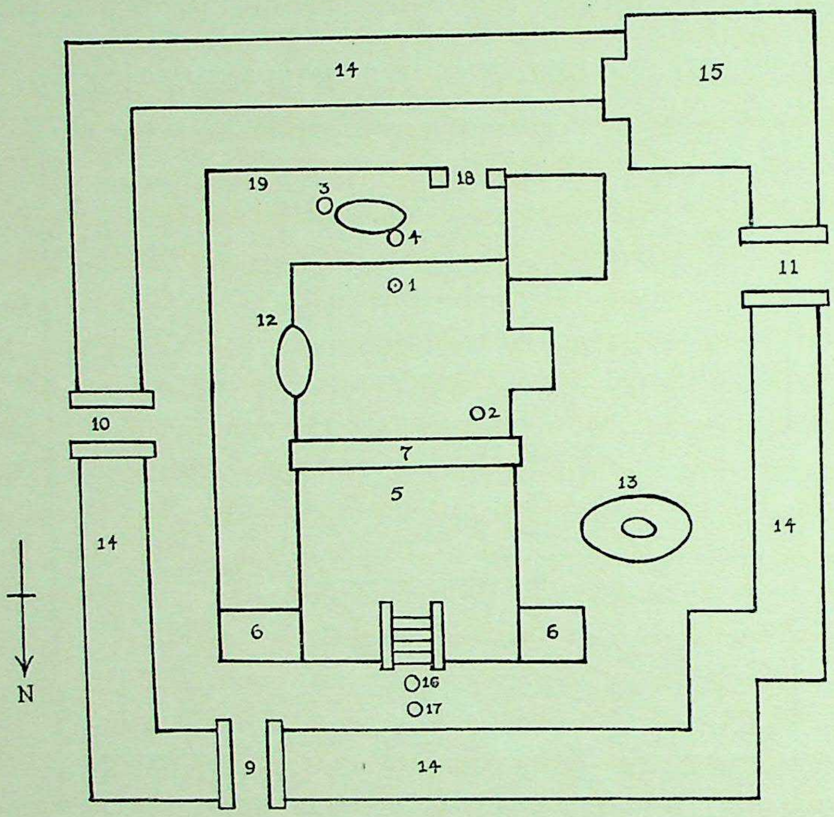


1. Sanctum and vimana over it.
2. Mukha mantapa.
3. Nandi.
4. Dhwajastambha.
5. Bali peetha.
6. Eastern gopura.
7. Kalyana mantapa.
8. Sanctuary for Natesa.
9. Sanctuary for Parvati (This must be in front of the south gopura).
10. Sanctuary for Subrahmanya.
11. Sanctuary for Ganesa.
12. Tank.
13. Enclosing wall.
14. South gopura.

The Lepakshi temple is dedicated to Veerabhadra. The established order of a Saiva temple in all its rigidity is not followed here. This can be seen in the ground plan of the Lepakshi temple (p. 58).

The *dhwajastambha* is atrophied to the form of a wooden post. The position of the *kalyana mantapa* is changed. It is behind the main structure, but it should be in the front, to the right. The pond is not in place. It could not be helped because of the structure of the rock. So it came to be where it is to the left of the sanctuary. No special sanctuary for Natesa is designed. But the hurrying architect got Nataraja carved on one of the pillars of the *mukha mantapa*. Ganesa too changed his position. Nagalinga replaces Ganesa and Ganesa is pushed much to the right. Above all, the *nandi*, an important auxiliary icon in a Saiva temple, finds no place within the enclosure of the temple. But a huge carving of a reclining *nandi* is about two furlongs

GROUND PLAN OF THE LEPAKSHI TEMPLE



1. Place of Veerabhadra icon.
2. Pillar on which Durga is carved.
3. Nagalinga.
4. Carving of Ganesa.
5. Mukha mantapa.
6. Flanking mantapas.
7. Verandah or artha mantapa.
8. Kalyana mantapa.
9. Main gate to the north.
10. Gate to the east.
11. Gate to the west.
12. Main body of the temple.
13. The pond.
14. Covered walk attached to the second enclosure.
15. Another mantapa.
16. Bali peetha.
17. Dhwajastambha.
18. Gate to the south.
19. The incomplete third enclosure.

away and it is said that it was not designed by the architect for the temple, but the accidental work of workmen during their off hour periods. The temple does not face east, but north, and the very orientation of it is revolutionary. It has the look of a fort built for defence rather than a temple designed for devotion and worship. Defence of religion was the need of the hour, and the architect could not escape the milieu. Though the architecture is heavy it is pleasing and has everything that a Saiva temple demands, though positions of minor deities and structures have shifted.

In some of the sculptures and paintings of Lepakshi we find deviations from the accepted traditional canons of iconography. The sculptures of *Ganga-Yamuna* motifs at the entrance do not conform to traditional iconography. Particularly in paintings of figures we notice several iconographic deviations.

Ardhanariswara is an important form of Siva. It expresses Siva in his completeness and totality.

In this androgynous form, he is half Siva and half Parvati. The painting of Ardhanari at Lepakshi slightly differs from the prescriptions of ancient iconographical texts and other forms sculptured elsewhere. This form requires Siva in the right half, Parvati in the left half, and the *vahana* to be shown behind, standing with its head appearing on the right side. Some texts prescribe that a parrot should be shown resting on the wrist of Parvati. But at Lepakshi neither the bull nor the parrot are shown. Further, even the drapery is unusual and does not conform to traditional laws and rules.

Lingodbhava murti is another interesting manifestation of Siva. According to sacred texts the figure of Siva should be shown in his aspect of Chandrasekhara murti in the front part of the *linga,* with the lower part of his legs down from ankles omitted. It is also required that on the top to the right Brahma should be represented in the form of a swan flying, and at the bottom to the left Vishnu to be shown in the form of a boar digging. The Lepakshi Lingodbhava murti is painted with care and skill. Siva's form is splendid. There is majestic gleam in his countenance. The traditional injunctions to depict Brahma and Vishnu in the forms of swan and boar are ignored. Yet, Siva here has splendour, dignity and grace.

The painting of Umamaheswara murti is another example where, too, we find deviations from the prescriptions of traditional texts. In this form Siva sits beside Parvati on a raised seat in *sukhasana,* i.e. in a posture of ease with one leg dangling down, and each must wind one arm round the other, in an attitude of embrace. Iconographical texts describe all details including the ornaments and weapons the deities should wear and hold. But the artist who painted this form of Siva at Lepakshi seems to have ignored many such injunctions. Further, Parvati's figure is painted small, almost to half the size of Siva. Yet there is left a feeling that both the figures in this composition are executed with skill, care and devotion.

These are a few instances of the bold deviations made in matters of architecture and iconography. But it should not be thought that the builders and decorators of the Lepakshi temple were not fully conversant with, or had little respect for the ancient traditions and canons of architecture and iconography. The temple and the sculptures bear ample evidence to their intense devotion and love of tradition. Yet they deviated, not as amateurs who knew not fully the knowhow, but as masters with the great spirit of revolution stirring in their hearts to restore and rebuild their religious edifice; it was not the minor detail but the form and substance that mattered. The chosen rock should be utilised and the work completed in the shortest possible time. So, the rock and the spirit of hurry to re-enforce and rebuild the tottering edifice of religion had certainly their influence on the builders and decorators of the Lepakshi temple.

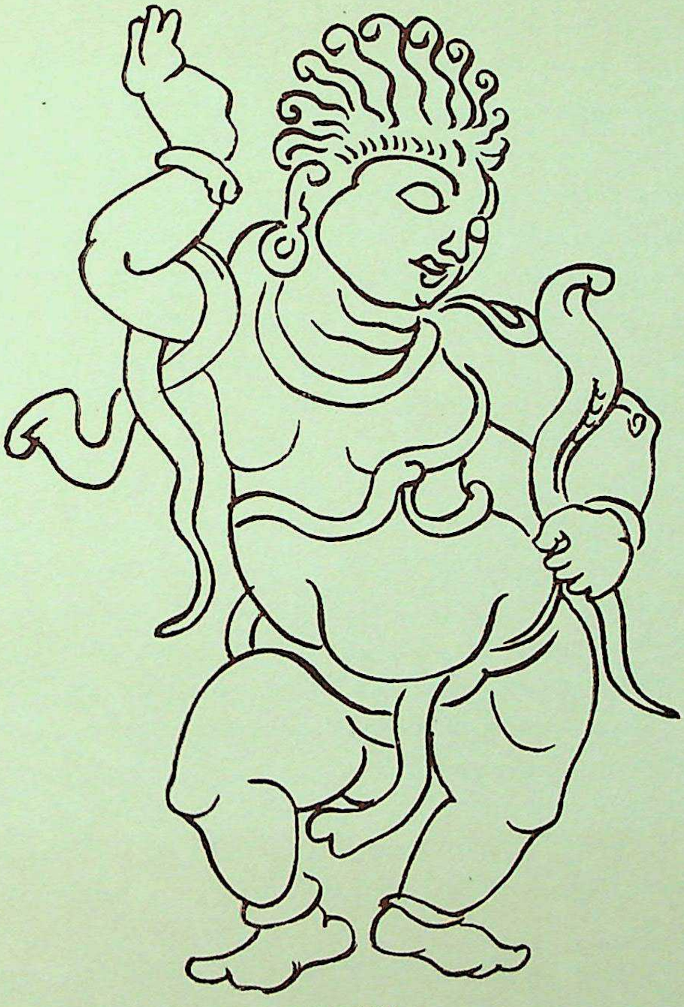
The presence of Vaishnava images in the temple along with Saiva images is surprising. All Saiva images are certainly proper and within their rights in a Saiva temple. But Vaishnava images are not usual. Yet, the Vaishnava images along with the Saiva images in the *mukha mantapa* are certainly in context. In the *mukha mantapa*, Vishnu and other gods present themselves to sing and dance to the glory of Veerabhadra. In the *kalyana mantapa,* all the gods arrive to witness and participate in the great event of the marriage of Siva and Parvati. Max Mueller called the Hindu religion as 'Henotheism'. By 'Henotheism' he meant that many gods exist but the one god to whom the worship is addressed becomes the all-important and the rest become subsidiary. So all the subsidiary gods celebrate the glory of Veerabhadra in his temple, and attend the marriage of Siva and Parvati.

But among the paintings we see episodes from the *Ramayana,* and figures of *avataras* of Vishnu. They are not certainly in conformity with the spirit of a Veerasaiva temple. The small sanctuary of Hanuman, built to one side of the main body of the temple within the inner enclosure, is absolutely revolutionary. It might have been added later. These paintings do express the spirit of the times, when religious toleration was at its peak and universalism in matters of religion was practised by both the emperors and the people of the Vijayanagar empire.

In spite of all such minor deviations and revolutionary innovations in matters of architecture and iconography the temple remains a classical monument of Vijayanagar art. The architecture, though stolid, is pleasing. It is not simply an elegant temple designed to house a god and other auxiliary deities but a powerful monument of a fortress to house and protect the god and the religion of the empire, nailed and fixed to the immovable rock of Kurmasaila. The sculpture has strength and the painting, vigour.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCULPTURE



A SIVA GANA

As indivisible parts, innumerable sculptures of great quality decorate the temple of Lepakshi. They are well executed and present all the salient characteristics of Vijayanagar art as in an open book. No monotony is felt as they are varied in character and present several themes. Even the style seems to vary according to the theme, position and relative importance of the figures presented. Some of the sculptured forms may at first not appear to go with the scheme and character of the temple. Yet, they are all in full context and do not conflict with the original idea and design of the temple.

The subjects and motifs of various sculptured forms here may be divided into the following categories:

A. Icons and other divine beings.
B. Story sculpture.
C. Human forms.
D. Forms of animals and birds.
E. Trees and other inanimate objects in nature.
F. Floral, geometrical and other abstract designs.

A. ICONS AND OTHER DIVINE BEINGS

One critic remarked that the Hindu sculptor transforms the solid rock into substances of dreams and they defy explanation by intellectualisation or aesthetic analysis. This is completely true of a Hindu icon. It is because a Hindu icon is just a diagram meant to express a definite religious concept and never intended to be the likeness of anything. Yet, many of the Hindu icons are in anthropomorphic forms, and are portrayed as supermen fashioned according to established canons of proportions, mainly intended to raise the beauty of the idol above and beyond the accidental beauty of a human being. They are creations of the mind and have no counterparts in nature. All these images, whether installed for worship or sculptured only as decorative motifs, have a purpose. This supreme purpose is to present the devout Hindu with all the truths which he accepts and all the beings with whom he must obtain communion through exercise and prayer.

Yet, there is nothing corresponding to idolatry in the making or worship of these images. For worship is never paid to these images but to something which the image stands for. So these images in Indian art are first and foremost utilitarian and are mainly intended to help the worshipper in his exercises of devotion and meditation. As such, traditions and prescriptions of iconography and rules of iconometry govern their forms and proportions, which make the artist's performance seemingly rigid. Yet many Hindu icons, including several at Lepakshi, show that the artists had both imagination and feeling, and exercised utmost freedom within the limits set by the formulas of iconography and rules of iconometry.

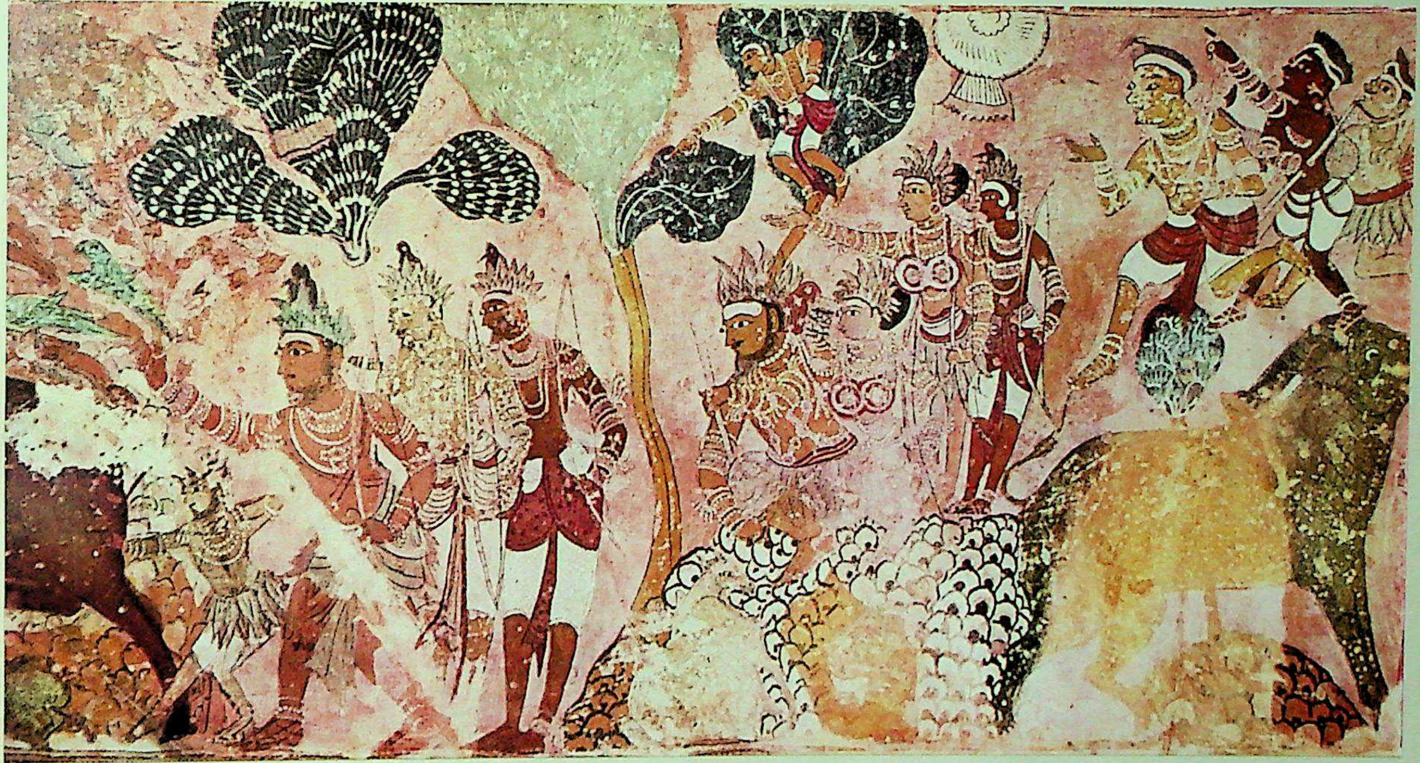
The principal icon, a lifesize figure of Veerabhadra is sculptured in the round in hard granite rock and installed for worship in the *sukanasi*. It is strictly according to the principles of iconography and laws of iconometry. Yet it has not become rigid nor has it lost its aesthetic value. It is with power, grace and beauty and fully imbued with the love and devotion of the sculptor. An invisible spirit circulates through its entire form and it has acquired immense power of concentration, the true purpose of the Hindu icon.

Veerabhadra is a terrific emanation of Siva from his mouth according to one *purana,* from a lock of his matted hair according to another. According to the *Vayu purana* he had a thousand hands, thousand eyes, thousand feet, wielding a thousand clubs, thousand shafts; holding the *sankha,* the *chakra,* the *parasu* and a blazing bow. He is fierce and terrific, shining with dreadful splendour. The object of this creation was to stop Daksha's sacrifice and harry the gods and other divine beings who were attending the sacrifice.

Veerabhadra is usually represented with three eyes and four hands. But representations with eight or ten hands are not rare. At Lepakshi, Veerabhadra has four arms, and bears *khadga, bana, dhanus,* and *khetaka;* these symbols agree with one iconographic text. He wears a garland of skulls and at his feet he has a *kapala,* a creation of the artist. This symbolises his trampling of Daksha and the sacrifice, as Daksha with his goat's head and horns is not represented, as he should be according to an iconographic text, beside him. His *jatamakuta* is profusely ornamented. About six feet in height, with sweeping curves of his form, and a bend in the waist, the icon of Veerabhadra at Lepakshi stands beautiful and fierce. It is indeed a masterpiece of sculptor's art of the medieval period in India.

Others fully sculptured in the round are the figures of different deities in the separate *sukanasis* around the main cell of Veerabhadra and two small *nandis* reposing. Among the different deities in the cells three are *lingas,* one is that of Parvati, one of Kali and one of Raghunatha.

Another noticeable icon fully sculptured in the round is that of the colossal Nagalinga standing in the open to the southeast of the main body of the temple. It is a gigantic cobra of seven hoods shading a phallus, around which the tail of the cobra is wound in three and a half coils. This cobra represents the *kundalini* force common to man and universe, and it is said to lie in man at the bottom of his spinal cord dormant and wound in three and a half coils. Rising to a height of eighteen feet, this grand sculpture is impressive by its sheer size, proportions and finish. Legend has it that it was carved by accident. But without this



Pl. V. SIVA HUNTING THE BOAR : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

gigantic monolithic sculpture in its place, the design of the temple would be incomplete, and balance and stability would have suffered. Moreover, the snake, by virtue of its association with the many gods of the Hindu pantheon, could not certainly be omitted, especially in a Saiva temple. The cobra is the dearest ornament of Siva. So this snake of Nagalinga has its place both in the structure and the mythology of this temple. This sculpture has a majesty and dignity not surpassed in this temple.

There is another sculpture in the round, of Hanuman, installed in an appended but small sanctuary. Its dating is doubtful and has little aesthetic value.

The rest of the icons or figures of gods and goddesses are relief sculptures, mostly executed on the various pillars of the temple. As relief sculptures they are only raising of forms on a two dimensional surface. But most of them are high reliefs and are given natural depth. As such they partake the qualities of both painting and sculpture; painting, since they are raised on a single plane, and sculpture, as they are carved in full natural depth. Such relief icon sculptures are mainly in three places and apparently in two different styles.

The *garbha griha* has some remarkable sculptures on the supporting granite pillars. The figure of Kalari murti, locally called Apamrityu pariharaka murti, is carved in high relief on the northwest corner pillar on which the figure of Durga is sculptured but on the reverse side. This is the terrific form of Siva assumed to save Markandeya and punish Kala, the god of death.

Markandeya was destined to die in his sixteenth year. He became an ardent devotee of Siva to save himself. On his seventeenth birthday, he was absorbed in prayer and worship in proximity to the Siva *linga*. Emissaries of Kala having failed to wrest the soul of Markandeya from his body, Yama proceeded in person. Siva came out of the *linga* in great anger and punished Yama and Yama came to the realisation that his operations were futile against an ardent devotee of Siva. Siva then blessed Markandeya to be forever sixteen years of age so that the destiny of his death at the expiry of his sixteenth year might not operate on him. Siva in the act of chastising Yama is known as Kalari murti.

This figure of Kalari murti is carved with originality. Usually he is represented as issuing out of a *linga* and kicking Kala on the chest. In this grand sculpture Siva in his terrific form is seen trampling on the prostrate form of Kala and pinning him with his trident. So, to make it clear that it was Kalari murti, the sculptor carved in low relief small figures illustrating the story of Markandeya. Markandeya is here seen embracing the *linga* and Yama arriving with his usual iconographic symbol, the *danda* of authority.

Here Kalari murti is expressed with great power and force. He has round bulging eyes and four arms as prescribed in several texts. His back hands carry *agni*, and *parasu*. His other two hands are holding the trident with which he is pinning down Kala who is seen wearing a crown, the insignium of his royalty. Instead of the usual *nandi,* a lion is carved behind him. In fact this lion, the carrier of Devi, is shared both by Kalari murti and Durga who is carved on the other side of the pillar. The figure of the lion also has violent movement harmonising with the formal attitude and the emotional state of his master. Yet there is no sense of turbulence or anger in the countenance of the form of Kalari murti. He does not wear even the conventional protruding tusks at the corners of his mouth. A feeling of serenity and quiet reigns supreme in the whole of the composition. This form, though expressive of extreme violence, has the full sense of repose of a classical sculpture and remarkable for its fluid, undulating contours, a high sense of proportion and a smooth undisturbed flow of the vigorous movement which seems to pervade the entire composition. The figure is profusely ornamented and beneath the crowding ornaments the clarity of the flowing figure is thoroughly preserved. This is indeed one of the masterpieces of sculpture presented at Lepakshi.

Just opposite to this, on the southeast corner pillar the form of Gajasura samhara murti is sculptured. Once, several Brahmins gathered round a Siva *linga* for the purpose of meditation and worship. An *asura* assuming the shape of an elephant came to disturb them. Then Siva came out of the *linga,* killed the elephant and made its skin his upper garment. This story is variously depicted in different *puranas*. But that Siva killed an elephant and had the elephant's skin as his clothing is common to all.

Several iconographic authorities describe the form of Gajasura samhara murti with four to eight arms. Here he is portrayed with six hands. Two of his back hands are holding the skin of the elephant aloft as in several other sculptures in India. Two of his hands are holding *damaru* and *agni.* Of the two front hands, one is in the *abhaya mudra,* and the other is held in the *Vinayaka hasta,* as seen in several Nataraja figures of Siva. Siva is depicted here dancing on the dead elephant, while at the same time promising protection to his devotees. Since this protection is to all devotees at all times, this gesture of protection takes the sculpture to the fourth dimension. Beside this Gajasura samhara murti, a small figure of the *asura* is seen holding a dagger. Perhaps, this was the *asura* before he took the shape of a fierce elephant to disturb the devotees of Siva.

This sculpture has the stamp of originality all over and is done with vigour and freedom. Through the terrific form of Siva, his benign aspect shines unmistakeably.

The other noteworthy sculptures here are of a *padmini jati stree* and a *panchala purusha* or *vastu purusha* as the local tradition terms them. They are not icons in the strictest sense, but are representations of divine beings very near in importance to the figures of gods and goddesses that decorate the temple. Hence the choice of the architect to present them on the same scale as that of gods and goddesses.

Both these sculptures were done in the manner of Atlantis and his female counterpart Caryatid. Such motifs and forms had been popular in India as early as the first century A.D. It was in the Gandhara sculptures that such motifs were originally introduced, derived from Hellenistic art. But there is nothing Hellenistic or foreign about the sculptures here. By the time the sculptures were carved at Lepakshi, such influences or even their sources had long been forgotten. They were well absorbed into Indian art in conception as well as execution. Both these figures seem to be supporting the temple structure, and adapting themselves to the contours of the pillars on which they are carved. In Greek and Gandhara sculptures Atlantis and Caryatid support the structure with both their hands raised and seemingly bear the burden with a lot of effort and strain. There they answer the architectural necessity, and take the form of a standing pillar. But in Lepakshi the figures are totally ornamental, completely at ease and support the structure with only one raised hand, with the other hand left gracefully free. They are completely at play, as the sculptor who carved them played with stone, mallet and chisel.

Between these, the figure of the *padmini jati stree* is remarkable and outstanding. Curves and counter curves echo and answer one another in this composition. The poise of head, torso, limbs and drapery curve and adapt themselves to the shape of the pillar, as the winding creeper she was holding in her left hand lightly resting on her thigh. The ornaments are profuse and in good taste, they do not disturb the flow of the main figure. In fact they enhance the beauty of the figure and emphasize its rhythmic movement. The elongation of form, handed down from Amaravati to the later Andhra sculptor, is not exaggerated or out of proportion but endows beauty and power to this grand piece of sculpture. In spite of the violent, strong movement designed by the sculptor to enable the powerful form to hold up the structure, the serenity in the face and the rest of the form remains undisturbed. The proportions are excellent and plasticity and aesthetic values are fully realised. This figure of the *padmini jati stree,* though designed as a Caryatid, is made to dance on *makara,* holding the vine of a creeper. It is the *Ganga* motif as it came down through tradition from the Gupta times and suggests a celestial dancer more than the earthly Ganga. This indeed is a masterpiece of medieval Indian sculpture rendered by a master artist.

The sculpture of the *vastu purusha* is also on the same pillar and in the same style as the *padmini jati stree.* The figure of the *vastu purusha* is indeed a rare phenomena and is not usually seen in most of the south Indian temples. It is both plan and supernal man as Stella Kramrisch chooses to call him. *Vastu purusha mantapa* is the diagram of the temple and a *yantra.* A *yantra* is a geometrical contrivance by which any aspect of the supreme principle may be bound, *yantra* meaning to bind. It is an artifice by which the *bhumi* is converted into the extent of the manifested universe. *Vastu purusha* is conceived in his anthropomorphic form as the one repository of all the science of architecture, the one who bears all earth and universe, and as the son of Brahma. He is the supernal man and the supreme principle in whose body the requisite knowledge of the temple building is acquired.

The form of *vastu purusha* here, though bearing the burden of the temple which in itself is the microcosm or epitome of the universe, is comparatively rigid and stiff. Its contours do not flow as freely as those of the *padmini jati stree,* but appear slightly forced. All these sculptures in the *garbha griha* follow the same style as the *Ganga-Yamuna* motifs at the principal gateway in their elongation of forms, and the rhythmic flow of curves.

Another icon sculpture exists in the *garbha griha,* in low relief and of small size which is nonetheless significant. It is the form of Mrityunjaya, the conqueror of death, sculptured in the usual manner on the facade of the *sukanasi,* the cell of Papanaseswara. It is a small figure about fifteen inches in height and neatly done. Mrityunjaya is here sitting in meditation in *padmasana,* with six arms. With his backhands raised above his head he is pouring water on himself with two pots as if bathing. Two of his hands, raised to the height of his shoulders, hold pots of water and the two front hands are joined in the lap holding a pot of *amrita.* Mrityunjaya is a form of Siva that cannot be missed in a Saiva temple of this order and dimension.

The *mukha mantapa* or *natya mantapa* is profusely decorated with lifesize sculptures of gods, goddesses and other divine beings. These splendid forms not only adorn but are also parts of the ten pillars of the central group. The four corner pillars are five-faced, each face carved with a lifesize form of a god or goddess. The other six pillars have only their inside faces carved with figures of gods. Some of these forms are not iconographically identifiable and some repeat themselves. The sculptures of Rambha, Brahma, Nataraja, Narada, Indra, Tumburu, Bhringi, Bhikshatana murti, Nandiswara and Saraswati can be recognised. The figure of Parvati among them is still doubtful; she is only recognised by the position in which she is placed and the horizontal cast mark which she wears. A god with five faces is seen playing a drum; perhaps the sculptor had intended it as Panchamukha Siva. Even his identity cannot be fixed. Several other forms of gods not identifiable, play different musical instruments like the *veena* and the drum. Some gods like Brahma, Nandiswara, and Nataraja repeat themselves. Nandiswara is sculptured here in his anthropomorphic form. He has a human body with a bull's head. Bhringi is also sculptured here in an unconventional manner. Bhringi is a great *bhakta* of Siva, who denied himself even food, water and sleep to be constantly absorbed in the worship of Siva. It is said that he had the habit of always going round Siva. So Bhringi is usually portrayed as an emaciated person, reduced to the form of a skeleton. He is usually identified by his three legs. Bhringi here is sculptured as a well fed dancer with a flying pigtail, but his three legs are unmistakable. Another curious sculpture here is that of Narada. He is portrayed as a *rishi,* and is recognised by the *veena* he is carrying. However different the forms of all these gods be, a singleness of spirit and purpose unites and binds them into one whole. They are all celebrating the manifestation of Siva as Veerabhadra on this sacred spot Kurma-saila.

The figure of Rambha, four feet nine inches in height, carved on the interior face of the southeast corner pillar, is similar to the *padmini jati stree* of the *garbha griha*. The curvature of the torso, the poise of the head, the drapery, the hair style and even the creeper she is lightly holding in her left hand are done exactly to the detail as in the figure of the *padmini jati stree*. But this grand sculpture is not done in the Caryatid manner, and her right arm, instead of supporting the superstructure, is only playfully held above the head in a dance gesture. She is also taking a stance of a dance pose on *makara,* exactly as the figure of the *padmini jati stree*. The vine she holds symbolises the abundant foliage, which a river holds on its banks. Perhaps this also, as the *padmini jati stree,* was intended as the figure of *Ganga*. It is nothing to be wondered at, for *Ganga* has a place in any Saivite temple, and especially in the *ranga mantapa* of the temple at Lepakshi.

The second remarkable sculpture in the *mukha mantapa* is that of Bhikshatana murti. According to the *puranas,* Siva cut off one of the heads of Brahma, the most learned of all beings in the *Vedas* and the *Sastras*. The sin of *brahma hatya* stuck to him and he had to undergo the course of conduct prescribed in the *Sastras* to wash away such a heinous sin. With a skull for his drinking vessel, and bones for his staves he went about begging food, never dwelling in any town or village until he was completely absolved of his sin and became purified. Such was the origin of Bhikshatana murti.

The picture of Bhikshatana murti here is not an individual figure sculptured like the rest of the figures of gods carved on the various pillars of the temple. It is a complete composition of four different forms compounded into one single picture. Siva as Bhikshatana murti here, is followed by one of his dwarf-like *ganas* holding on his head an ornamental begging bowl. A deer, one of his faithful followers, is licking one of his right hands. A *rishi patni* is emptying a ladle of rice into the begging bowl. Here Bikshatana murti is sculptured in a classical manner. He has four hands. The upper right hand holds the *damaru,* the upper left hand bears a decorated *sula,* which rests horizontally on his shoulders at his back. The attitude of walking is also expressed in a subtle but effective manner, as it should be, for Bhikshatana murti is always wandering. But in this sculpture too the artist of Lepakshi had his freedom. The head is not represented as dishevelled in the usual and customary manner but as well dressed, clean in *jatamakuta* fashion and beautifully ornamented.

The adjoining side of the pillar is used by the artist for carving the *rishi patni,* without which form the composition remains incomplete. The *rishi patni* is smaller in size than Bhikshatana murti. But the figure is elegant and has a delicate touch. A humorous touch is added to the composition by letting the skirt of the *rishi patni* slip down to her thighs. It is said that when Siva wandered all over the earth as Bhikshatana murti begging to atone for his sin, the *rishi patnis* who happened to see his handsome form fell in love with him.

In this remarkable sculpture the artist expressed not only the whole legend, but also suggested a volume beyond it. Even in this the usual convention of expressing the relative importance of persons by their sizes is fully followed. Bhikshatana murti is five feet three inches high compared to the figure of the *rishi patni* who is only three feet seven inches. The *gana* has dwarf-like proportions, but these things do not disturb the aesthetic values of the composition. The plasticity attained in the composition, as well as in the individual figures, is indeed remarkable.

The figure of Ananda tandava murti carved on the inside face of the northeastern pillar is a grand sculpture. It has four hands and the front two hands are broken. Due to the limitations set by the dimension of the pillar it seems a bit cramped and restricted. It would have been happier on a broader surface. The artist must have experienced great difficulty in designing and discovering Nataraja in that pillar of inconvenient dimensions. Evidently it is a sculpture done to the order of the architect and not out of the will of the sculptor, but it has grace, vigour and plasticity.

All the sculptures in the *mukha mantapa* also follow the style of *Ganga-Yamuna* motifs at the main entrance. But the freedom of the sculptor seems to be slightly restricted here. This was largely due to the subjects chosen and the restricted dimensions of the pillars, which imposed the form on the sculptors. Still all of them have vitality, movement, life and aesthetic values.

The figures of gods, goddesses and other divine beings carved on the pillars of the *kalyana mantapa* are of an entirely different style. It is as if the artists have discovered those forms within the standing pillars themselves. They do not seem to come out of the pillars as the sculptures of the *mukha mantapa* or the *artha mantapa,* but seem to be imbedded in them. Further the free elongation of forms which endows so much grace and force to the sculptured figure, a characteristic of Andhra sculpture since the times of Amaravati, is entirely missing here. On the other hand, these forms appear almost stunted and are stolid and heavy. They are all static, not mobile and moving. They do not bend and curve gracefully as the sculptures in the *mukha mantapa* or in the interior of the *garbha griha.* The intention of the sculptor to present gods, goddesses and other divine beings rushing to the scene of Siva's marriage is not at all realised here. But it appears as if they were there in their calm serenity waiting for Siva and Parvati to arrive and celebrate their marriage. Thus an entirely different style of sculpture in the carving of gods and goddesses is presented in the *kalyana mantapa,* from that in the *mukha mantapa* or in the *garbha griha.* This is akin to the later dravidian style of sculpture, and far removed from the original Andhra style of Amaravati. Perhaps it was a different set of sculptors that carved the *kalyana mantapa,* or these sculptures might have been done much later than the construction of the temple proper.

In the *kalyana mantapa* we can see lifesize figures of gods, goddesses, *rajarishis* and *brahmarishis* in profusion. The main motif of this *mantapa* is the marriage of Siva and Parvati. On one face of a pillar in the northeast we see Siva and Parvati married and a *rishi* giving benediction to them. Among the gods and goddesses present at the marriage, in addition to the *dikpalakas,* we can distinguish Ganapati, *nandi,* Dattatreya with his three heads, Vishnu, a five-faced god not identifiable, Siva, Lakshmi, Parvati, Dhanvantari and Narada. Narada can be identified by the *Veena* and Dhanvantari, the celestial doctor, by a pot of nectar he is holding in the right hand. There are several *brahmarishis* and *rajarishis* sculptured on several standing pillars. In fact, they dominate the congregation. Most of these figures are sculptured to a height of about four and a half feet and appear almost lifesize. An exception is made in the case of standing Ganapati, carved on the southeast pillar; he reaches only to a height of about three and a half feet.

Among the eight *dikpalakas,* seven are distinguishable either by their *vahanas* or by other iconographic emblems. Agni has a ram carved beneath him. Similarly, Indra has an elephant. Moreover, he has several eyes all over the body. Indra became thousand-eyed due to a curse of *maharshi* Gautama. Kubera has four hands, holding a *gada* and a *khadga* in his two back hands, and is wearing *abhaya* and *varada mudras* in his lower hands. Yama is identified by the *danda* he is holding and Varuna by the *pasa.* And Isana is only another form of Siva carrying the *parasu* and the *trisula.*

Among the carvings of the *kalyana mantapa,* the figures of Ganesa, Lakshmi, Indra and the five-headed god are oustanding. The figure of Ganesa though done only in high relief seems to attain the qualities of a sculpture in the round. We feel that we can detach it from the pillar and turn it round to examine the rear side of the sculpture. It is not done on the same scale as the other gods and goddesses, being less than three and a half feet in height. But Ganesa is placed in a specially carved decorative niche, which is complete with *makara torana* and *simhatalata* in the centre of the arch. The carving was done with mastery and skill. The form of Ganesa is profusely ornamented and the figure is neither concealed nor disturbed. The artist has taken great care to present every detail prescribed in the text books of iconography. The proportions are excellent and pleasing. This figure has a bearing of ease and forward movement, for which the Hindu medieval artist so much strove and achieved. It is as if the form discovered itself and is trying to disengage from the rock matrix. It is indeed one of the excellent pieces in the temple in spite of the apparent virtuosity present in it.

In the figure of Lakshmi, not withstanding the cramped style, the artist achieved sufficient grace. It is romantic even for a medieval sculptor. The ornaments and the style of drapery presented are conventional and belong to an age of antiquity. Even in this sculpture virtuosity dominates expression, but the skill of the sculptor is unquestionable.

The figure of the five-headed god, though well executed, is a little cumbrous in effect. He has five heads and ten arms. In eight arms he bears *damaru, naga, agni, chakra, sankha, dhanus, sula* and *tanka.* The other two arms present the *abhaya* and *varada mudras.* Hampered by the rules of iconography and iconometry and cramped within the limited space, the figure has almost become rigid. An elaborate niche designed by the sculptor for this figure has not added to its grace, dignity or grandeur.

In the sculpture of Indra, the artist achieved remarkable plasticity of form and there is close symmetry. The form of the *vajra* which Indra bears in both the upper arms is novel and original. Some pundits identify it as *tanka* and it does not go against tradition.

The sculpture of a *rajarishi* is another piece of work to be noted in the *kalyana mantapa*. The proportions followed by the sculptor are entirely novel and render the figure slightly comic and even here virtuosity is unmistakable and detail profuse.

All the sculptures of gods, goddesses and other divine beings on the pillars of the *kalyana mantapa* are romantic. It was not the vision of the artist that gave form and shaped them, but the prescriptions in various religious and iconographical texts. They are all actually delimited by the forms and shapes of the standing pillars, but the artists who carved these figures were faithful to the treatises is beyond doubt. They attempted to endow all the figures with *prana,* not by a heave in the torso as the earlier classical artists had done, but by bloating the belly. The carving is faultless and has acquired a finish comparable to the best of Hindu sculptures. They had achieved the sharpness of metal casting which most of the sculptures retain even to this day. This may also be due to the material, the hard sandstone on which they are carved.

Among the stone icons one cannot fail to mention the huge Ganapati carved on a single boulder beside the Nagalinga. It is a huge sculpture of about seven and a half feet height on a rough plinth which is four feet eight inches high. This Ganapati has four hands, the back hands holding the *pasa* and the *ankusa.* The front right hand holds his broken tusk, and in the left he has a ball of butter which his trunk is tenderly caressing. A *naga* is wound round his huge belly, which according to the legend is there actually to prevent it from bursting. He is seated on his *vahana.* Sitting in a huge niche he is awesome and impressive. The carving has good proportions and a neat finish. Evidently, there was an attempt to colour this gigantic figure and only a few traces are now left. The colouring is bad and not in harmony with the other paintings in the temple. Perhaps it was done by amateurs much later.

B. STORY SCULPTURE

There are only two stories told in sculpture at Lepakshi and they are graphically told. Both have one thing in common. *Bhakti* ultimately triumphs over everything on earth and in heaven. Both these stories are related in a continuing series of relief sculptures on the wall of the *artha mantapa.* This wall faces the *mukha mantapa* and is divided into two unequal parts by the *dwara* opening into the *garbha griha.*

On both the sides of the doorway on the wall are three parallel bands of relief sculptures. The top band is a simple procession of *hamsas* and it is one foot ten inches wide. The bottom band, consisting of a procession of elephants, is two feet four inches at its widest. In the centre band, which is about two feet in height, the two stories are told.

The story of Siriyala is illustrated on the front wall, which is to the left of the doorway. This sculptured band runs to a length of a total of about thirtythree feet, part of it is on the flanking wall facing west. In fact, the story begins at the far end in the west-facing wall and runs all along the north-facing wall to the jamb of the doorway.

Iswara or Lord Siva wishes to test the devotion of a king, the father of the boy Siriyala. So he descends down to the earth in the guise of an old and withered ascetic, meets the king who requests him to be his guest and honour him. Thereupon the ascetic feigns sickness, and demands that the head of the king's son be cooked for his dinner as that alone could cure him. The king and queen, pledged to honour the guest in the name of Lord Siva, accede to his demand. They sacrifice their son and treat the guest. Siva, pleased with their unsullied and intense devotion, reveals himself in his true form, blesses the father and mother, and restores their son to them.

The story is presented graphically in several continuing compositions. The sculptor has added power to the story by prescribing the conflict in the queen due to her tender love towards her dear son. The merit in this sculpture is that the story is told clearly and continuously.

The second story is that of *Kiratarjuneeya,* an episode from the *Mahabharata.* Urged by his brothers, Arjuna goes to do penance to obtain the *pasupata* from Siva. Siva assumes the form of a *kirata* and pays a visit to Arjuna to test him. A wild boar, the creation of Siva, charges them. Siva and Arjuna let fly their arrows at the wild boar simultaneously, instantly killing the wild animal. Then a fight ensues between them for the possession of the carcass. Arjuna, though emaciated and weak with long penance, does not flinch but fight spiritedly and fiercely even to the point of exhaustion. Siva pleased, manifests his true form to Arjuna, bestows the coveted *pasupata* and blesses him.

The sculptured band illustrating this famous episode runs almost to a length of fifty feet, partly on the wall facing west and partly on the wall facing north. It starts at the far end of the western wall and finishes as it reaches the jamb of the doorway. It begins with the five *Pandavas* in the forest, receiving the advice of *rishi* Dhananjaya, and Arjuna proceeds alone into the forest to do penance after paying worship to Siva in the form of a *linga* in a temple. Then we see Arjuna in penance. Indra too once makes his appearance to test the sincerity of Arjuna. A terrific boar enters the scene frightening away a *rishi* who is nearby. The boar killed, Arjuna and Siva meet in combat. Even Parvati is present in one composition. Finally we see Iswara and Parvati in their true forms, on their *vahana nandi,* bestowing boons on Arjuna.

In contrast to the other story, the sculptures in this panel are done with spirit and in freedom. The story is expressed clearly and with unbroken continuity. The forms of the stylised tree and the boar are notable. Some of the sculptures illustrating this episode are full of life and vitality.

C. HUMAN FORMS

It is in the carving of human forms like those of acrobats, cowherds, musicians and other ordinary folk that the genius of Lepakshi sculptors expresses itself. It is the genre, characteristic of Vijayanagar. All these subjects are outside the strict limitations of iconography, and so the artist could exercise his utmost freedom. All these forms appear completely naturalistic, but there is idealisation. In the expression of humour, joy, love and warmth of feeling some of them are timeless. In all these sculptures, no conventions, laws or principles of sacred texts hamper the artists. They expressed themselves with utmost freedom sometimes bordering on licentiousness. They just chiselled away their feelings and emotions, with faultless forms executed in utmost joy and freedom. They are joy to the spectator. Except that such sculptures do not get the same amount of importance due to them, for a Hindu temple is not strictly meant to provide a museum of art for the study of aesthetics. It is in these sculptures that the Vijayanagar artist revelled and even excelled himself.

All these sculptures are done on a small scale from about fifteen to seventeen inches height, conforming to the area of that of a section of a side of the pillar. They are low reliefs and share the freedom and characteristic of painting. They all appear as if a soft brush moved over the stone with freedom and created them. Detail never troubled the sculptors. They were all done in a sweep of spontaneity.

Among these sculptures, the *lata sundari* and the leaning shepherd in the *mukha mantapa* and the acrobats, dancers and musicians in the *kalyana mantapa* are worthy of study.

D. FORMS OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS

The forms of animals and birds sculptured at Lepakshi cannot be classified under a single category as they are done in different styles. Among the forms of animals two distinct styles can be observed. The procession of elephants carved in horizontal bands in friezes of the plinth are in a set order, chiselled according to the canons. Their forms are rounded, bulging and heavy, their movements, positions and proportions are ordered as in the carving of a jewel. The style adopted in these forms is akin to the Hoyasala style of sculpture. Here it is a derived style and remains lifeless as all such art.

In the style of Vijayanagar, freedom and abandon is seen among the forms of animals sculptured on the pillars of the *kalyana mantapa,* the *mukha mantapa* and on the wall of the *artha mantapa*. Elephants, deer, cows, monkeys and many other forms make their appearance, and live, play, frisk and gambol on the faces of the shafts of pillars and walls. They are done in low relief and share the qualities of painting and appear as if the sculptor simply chiselled away chips of stone to discover the forms imprisoned in the rock. Though none of them may be considered a masterpiece, they are good sculptures and cannot be neglected by a student of art.

The forms of birds are all stylised and done in low relief. The form of *hamsa* is often repeated at Lepakshi, as in many other south Indian temples. The *hamsa* being Brahma's *vahana* is also a symbol of *prana* and as such has a prominent place in Hindu mythology and temple. Nothing in nature corresponds to the form of *hamsa* sculptured by an Indian medieval sculptor. So to express this form the artist had no other recourse than relying on the descriptions and prescriptions of ancient texts, and traditional forms handed over to him through generations. That the artist was bound by the prescriptions of the canonical texts is evident in this. Every form carved in Lepakshi expresses grace and beauty, including those traditionally set jewel-like forms.

E. TREES AND OTHER INANIMATE OBJECTS

Trees, mountains and other minor objects sculptured on the Lepakshi temple are stylised abstractions. The mountains are expressed in the traditional style by piling up curves in the manner of a pyramid or a triangle. The traditional Hindu sculptor was never interested in reproducing their forms in a naturalistic way. So he was satisfied with suggesting abstracted forms drawn from memory and made them more interesting than naturalistic representations. Such tree forms were used not only in the relation of a story but also to fill otherwise empty spaces.

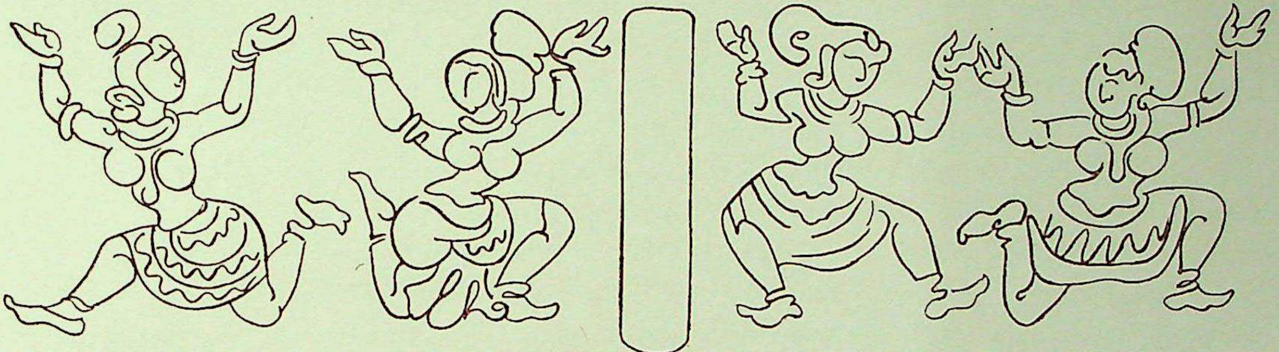
F. FLORAL, GEOMETRICAL AND OTHER ABSTRACT DESIGNS

The floral and other abstract geometrical designs are mostly in the *lata mantapa* and the part of the *kalyana mantapa* where the architect wanted to suggest a heavenly garden of vines and creepers. There is a certain amount of repetition found but there is also variety. These repetitions are not aesthetically stultifying or harmful but are a powerful assertion of the sculptor's faith and devotion. These flowing forms are typical of the medieval Indian sculptor who loved to abandon himself in the rhythmic lines and curves to create forms in full order. Among them we see traces of Moslem influence. The Moslem architect could not dress his edifices with forms of living beings, for, to imitate God-created forms was sin to him. To gratify his aesthetic urge he took recourse to calligraphy and geometry and created patterns that could effectively decorate his architecture. Such forms to him provided a healthy discipline and source of inspiration.

Among the various sculptures of the Lepakshi temple we find repetitions as in all Hindu temples. But such repetitions should not be considered a weakness. A tremendous sense of power is gained in every Hindu temple by them. It was a strong expression of faith and devotion. In the whole of south Indian sculpture, it is difficult to find a match to the variety of sculpture presented at Lepakshi. The artist does not attempt to suggest environment or space, for the temple itself is both environment and space. He is in a world of dreams and spiritual ecstasy, where solid ground, atmosphere and space least matter.

CHAPTER IX

THE PAINTING



The style of painting at Lepakshi exhibits a character entirely different from the known ancient classical styles of India. Yet its origin is not difficult to seek. The peculiar line of the chest swelling with an ascending curve is inflated with power and breath, the three quarters profile with the farther eye allowed to project beyond the cheek, rudimentary suggestive backgrounds, and the flowing delicate lines, can first be seen in some paintings of the Kailasanatha temple at Elura and later in the Jain miniatures of western India, with set stylistic conventions, by about the 13th century and fully developed in the 15th century.

The painting at Lepakshi is classical since it belongs to the first order and has in it the origin of many folk art styles of Andhra and south India. Even today many of the leather puppets of Andhra and south India are seen in a style derived from that of Lepakshi.

The painting at Lepakshi is mostly descriptive and where it is not, it is decorative, and rendered completely in flat pattern suggesting only a single plane, with the artist never attempting to suggest depth either by chairoscuro or by rendering the composition in multiple planes. The design is entirely by line, even the details which are mainly decorative are suggested only in appropriate lines, so that the entire painting presents an appearance of coloured drawings and rather free painting. But it is full of verve, vitality and filled with intense human drama in which gods, angels and all other beings of creation participate and the subject presented takes away the spectator into a state of complete absorption.

Figures painted here include divine, human, animal, bird, tree and other forms, either to illustrate a story or a dramatic episode, or to portray a divine being with all the iconographic implications and details. The forms are painted in different attitudes. The human beings are seen mostly in profile or three-fourth profile powerfully rendered in action. The deities are presented here in full front view, sometimes sitting and sometimes standing. In all these painted forms, the suggestion of physical movement is powerful. Many of the human forms rendered here do not have slim waists as in the sculpture and painting of Ajanta, but slightly thick and bloated abadomens. This is perhaps to indicate they are human beings and not supernal men. But it is in accordance with the medieval south Indian artist's figures filled with *prana*.

Several human figures in standing postures in these paintings are with a slight slant suggesting subdued animation. All these human figures present an interesting spectacle. Clothes of innumerable patterns and textures cover them. The styles of turbans and other head dresses presented are not only unusual but varied and many. There is variety in hair styles on the heads of *rishis*. But most of the ladies have their hair dressed uniformly in one style. The *jatamakuta* on the head of Siva, presented here many times has a special style not found elsewhere either in sculpture or in painting. Here it is simplified and formalised into a truncated cone filled with crisscross lines to suggest the hair that makes up for the crown.

Animal forms such as those of deer, rabbit, boar, cow and bull repeated here are rendered in the conventional manner. Other inanimate objects like rocks, trees and foliage are also painted conventionally to suggest the rudimentary background but never with an intention to portray them as they are. The eyes of animals in Lepakshi paintings are remarkable. They are rendered in the manner of a human eye with several parallel lines suggesting eyebrow and other folds around the eye. This endows the animals with human character and elevates them to fully participate in all the episodes presented in the several paintings of Lepakshi.

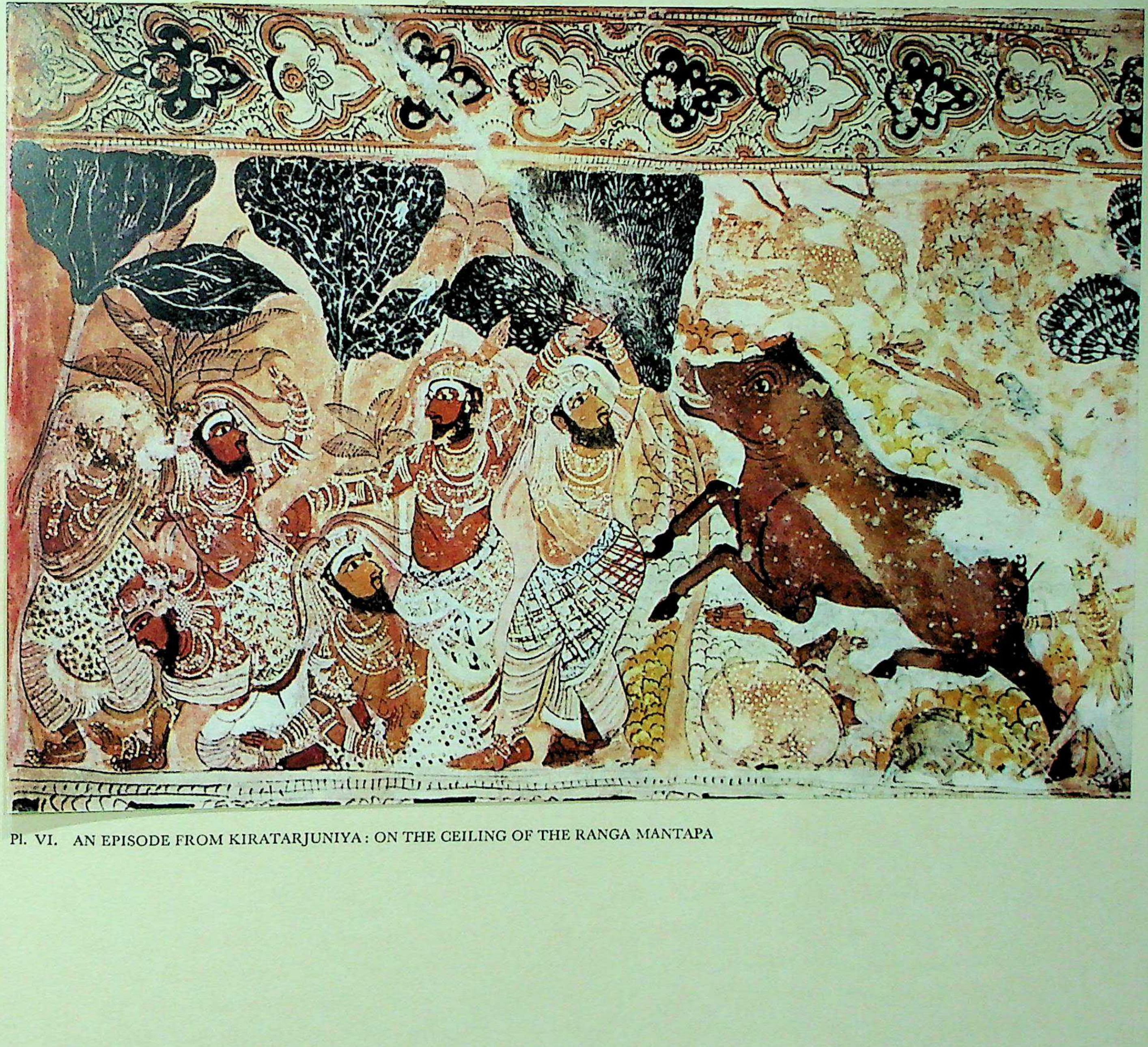
The painted panels at Lepakshi invariably have painted borders of textile designs, a peculiarity not observed elsewhere. Even the beams demarking the rectangular panels are decoratively painted with flat and varied designs. All these give the character of a glorious carpet canopy to the ceiling of Lepakshi.

The colours used here are but a few, but varied in tones and values, sometimes the colours mixed with each other. They are chiefly earth-red, black, green, yellow ochre, white and gray, among which gray is used rather profusely. Blue is significantly missing, green in some value or other taking its place wherever necessary. The painting is done on a prepared brilliant white stucco, probably of fine lime. This perhaps is one of the reasons why the paintings at Lepakshi are so bright till today.

The temple must have been originally painted. Traces of painting can be seen even today on the ceilings of the outer cloister, the ceilings of flanking *mantapas,* and also the ceiling of the attached cloister behind the temple. But the ceilings of the *mukha mantapa,* the *artha mantapa,* the *garbha griha,* and some of the walls of the *garbha griha* are bright with many paintings even today. Parts of them are damaged but still much remains today to sing in a silent voice the glory of Vijayanagar and its art.

PAINTING IN THE MUKHA MANTAPA

The ceiling of the *mukha mantapa* is divided into different oblong rectangular panels by beams resting on pillars and supporting the roof. In total, eight such panels can be counted. The central part of the *mukha mantapa* is formed into a square and the four sides of it are made into one panel for painting. On both the sides of the painted square, six panels run north and south, three on each side, and the panels at the extreme ends on east and west are the shortest. One panel, the longest in the *mantapa,* running east and west to a length of about sixty feet is only three and a half feet wide. This panel is painted with an episode of a famous king of the South, called Manu Cholan, who granted justice to an aggrieved cow at the cost of his son's



Pl. VI. AN EPISODE FROM KIRATARJUNIYA : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

life. This story was illustrated in the famous temple at Tiruvallur, where it is believed to have occurred. The king's son on a fast running chariot ran over a calf, killing it. The cow sought justice by ringing a bell kept for the purpose at the end of a rope at the palace gate. The king sought his counsellors' advice and administered justice by keeping the body of the dead calf on the same chariot and running it over the body of the prince, killing him. Gods were pleased at this great act of justice, manifested themselves in their forms before the king, restored the lives of the calf and the prince and showered blessings on the noble and just king.

This famous story is told vividly and dramatically in a continuous series of pictures on this panel. It starts at the western end where a good bit of painting, to a length of about ten feet, is peeled off. The surviving scenes that can be identified, begin with a large *mantapa* with pillars, battlements and a *sikhara* on the top. This was a convention adopted by the Lepakshi artists to represent the palace of a king. Three persons, probably servants by the way they are dressed, are looking away from the *mantapa* towards a *ratha*. The *ratha* here is a flat wagon with no superstructure on three wheels. There are three persons standing on the chariot. One of them is the prince marked and distinguished by his *kirita,* garlands and moustache. The one behind him carries a long bow, probably intended as bodyguard to the prince's person.

Two horses draw the chariot and they are ill painted. They both look like bulls. A dead calf is lying beneath the central wheel of the chariot. Along with the calf a human being becomes a victim to the racing chariot and his crushed figure too is seen lying beside the dead calf. The cow too appears in this composition. She is beautiful and well painted unlike the other animals in the panel. It is of a fine breed with long, tapering horns. Her hump and tail are lifted in excitement, her front legs are held high, she is already demanding justice.

In the next composition a dignified human figure wearing a *kirita,* probably the king, is seen listening to the complaint and demands of the cow. He seems to be glaring at the prince in anger, the prince already looking feeble and crushed.

Next we see the king holding council with pious men. Probably he is listening to a discourse or discussing the late incident. In the next scene we see the cow suing for justice, by ringing the bell hanging outside the hall of justice. This hall is also represented as a square *mantapa* supported by pillars. There are trees and leaves painted here, suggesting a rudimentary background. The next scene presents the king with two attendants, listening to the cow. A dark person is also seen here, probably pleading the cause of the cow.

In the next composition we see the execution of the royal decree. The *ratha* now carries the dead calf and has run over the prostrate body of the prince. The cow is following the *ratha* closely from behind, licking the body of her dear dead calf.

Then we see Siva and Parvati arriving on their *vahana,* the *nandi*. We now see both the cow and the calf, the calf this time alive and bright. Further on a few figures are damaged. Later we see figures of Siva, a *rishi,* and forms of some royal personnel including ladies. Perhaps this marks the happy ending of the story where Siva blesses the noble and righteous king.

The easternmost panel running south to north too is an oblong rectangle, about seventeen feet in length and five feet four inches in width. It starts at the southern end with a beautiful representation of Siva in the aspect of Bhairava and relates the story of Draupadi's marriage. Bhairava here is a calm and serene figure painted white. He has eight arms holding various weapons and symbols. Among them are the *kapala, khadga, bana,* a parrot, *damaruka,* the *pinaka dhanus* and the *chandrarekha*. He is wearing a garland of human skulls reaching down to his knees. A figure of his faithful dog looking up and trying to reach a *kapala* held by Bhairava is also painted. A couple of devotees on either side of the figure of Bhairava are also present. One of them can be Drupada praying to Bhairava, his family deity, just before holding the *swayamvara* of his daughter.

The next scene is that of king Drupada seated with his daughter in his lap with two lady attendants standing beside him. They are in a pavilion nicely decorated with festoons and other hanging objects. There is also the figure of a fish painted in the composition, probably to suggest that *matsya yantra,* a device in which a fish is behind a revolving wheel, by which the bridegroom is to be selected, is occupying the mind of the affectionate father.

The third scene is evidently that of Arjuna, trying to shoot the fish in the *matsya yantra,* with his bow and arrow. He is wearing a *kirita* and garlands that identify him as the prince in quest of the bride. Standing beside Arjuna is a dark figure. His form is rendered very graceful. He is fully decorated with jewels and ornaments. There can be no doubt about his identity. He is none other than Krishna, the friend and constant companion of Arjuna and the *Pandavas*. Beside Krishna is another figure, which is somewhat damaged and not identifiable.

The rest of the picture seems to be the final scene in which the five *Pandava* brothers receive the princess, Draupadi. Draupadi here is painted of fair complexion. It must be recalled that she is renowned in the *Mahabharata* as a dark maiden, and was even referred to as *krishna* or dark. Krishna, the constant companion of the *Pandavas* is also present in this composition. He seems to be pouring handful of auspicious grain over the head of Draupadi, the newly wed bride. Perhaps the artist wished to suggest the celebration of the marriage also in this composition.

The next panel, much larger than the previous one, measuring nearly thirtyseven feet by five feet nine inches is famous as Vatapatrasayi panel. It is even otherwise famous since the portraits of the two brothers Virupanna and Veeranna are present here. This panel relates no story or incident, but presents two entirely different and simple scenes, one Vaishnavite and the other Saivite. They are Vatapatrasayi and Veerabhadranugraha.

Vatapatrasayi is the aspect of Vishnu lying as a baby on a banyan leaf and floating over the primordial waters before creation. It was the silent moment when the whole cosmos was at rest and dormant without vibration or motion. His form is painted in a shade of green that signifies Vishnu. The figure is profusely decked with jewels and ornaments, mostly of pearls. This figure at Lepakshi is famous for its bewitching eyes which seem to follow the viewer and penetratingly look at him wherever he takes a stand. In fact this is the only figure in the *mukha mantapa* painted fully in direct front view. There are six other figures in this composition probably intended by the artist as different gods seeking the grace of Vatapatrasayi and imploring him to start the act of creation.

The next scene to the north of Vatapatrasayi is that of Veerabhadranugraha, or Veerabhadra bestowing grace, occupying the entire length of the panel. In the centre we see God Siva as Veerabhadra, the ram-headed Daksha, a small figure of a priest and groups of various devotees.

The figure of Veerabhadra which occupies the central position is damaged, but is identified by the figure of Daksha with his ram head. There is an interesting story of how Daksha happened to get the ram head. Daksha was preparing for a sacrifice to which he invited all the gods except Siva. Siva felt slighted, and in great wrath proceeded to the place of sacrifice and created the terrible Veerabhadra to destroy it. Daksha was decapitated and his head was thrown into the sacrificial fire. Subsequently Siva restored Daksha to life but his head could not be found, so, it was replaced with a ram's head.

The composition of Veerabhadranugraha is in three parts. The first is of a group of five ladies, three of whom are fair and two dark. The fair ones have a regal appearance. The dark ones are perhaps servants. The designs on the sarees worn by these ladies are superb. In the second part are two damaged figures. The *prabhavali* and the ornaments and the presence of a priest beside may indicate that they are Siva and Parvati. But the presence of ram-headed Daksha, standing in reverence with folded hands in front of the deity, identifies the deity as Veerabhadra.

The next group contains two large men, two youths, two attendants with turbans and six men with long conical caps. Two stately figures with conical caps in this composition are locally identified as the portraits of Virupanna and Veeranna. Two smaller figures beside them have a close affinity to them in colour, form and dress. The last six figures in this panel are more or less uniform in dress, ornaments and deportment. The caps worn by them are of a single pattern. They might be a military guard in uniform accompanying their master, Virupanna.

The next panel which is of the same length but only five feet wide is known as *Asta dikpalakas* panel. It illustrates the marriage of Siva and Parvati, officiated by Brahma and attended by the eight *dikpalakas,* Vishnu, an unidentifiable five-headed god and several *rishis.* At the end of the panel, Parvati, painted in a shade of green, is seated with attendants, listening to a musical discourse by a maid.

Here Siva is majestically seated in a shrine elaborately rendered with *vimana* and turrets and battlements all around. This too is a conventional representation of palatial structures. Siva's form is rendered fair, has four arms and is dressed in tiger skin. In his upper arms, he holds the *parasu* and the *saranga.* Of the lower hands one is in *varada mudra,* perhaps bestowing grace to all the gods and the *rishis* who were there to witness their marriage. The other hand is gracefully extended, touching the hand of Parvati. Below Siva is a small *nandi* who is evidently exuberant with joy. He is jumping with the front legs lifted high in the air. Parvati is seen here kneeling and bending forward with a stretched hand gently touching the extended hand of Siva and holding a lotus bud in the other. The saree of Parvati has a beautiful and wide border of intricate patterns.

We see Brahma with three crowned heads, seated inside a pavilion with pillars decorated with plantain leaves in front of a sacred fire, officiating at the marriage. Here Brahma is holding in one of his hands the *kamandala,* a kind of water pot. Perhaps he is also holding a *pustaka* in the other hand, but it is not distinguishable as the painting is damaged there.

Himavat and his wife Mena stand closely beside the bridal pair. Himavat and Mena are the parents of Uma and Ganga, the two spouses of Siva. Himavat is pouring water from a container to effect *kanyadana* or the giving away of the bride. The figure of Mena is dark. She is holding Himavat's hand, thus symbolically participating in the *kanyadana*.

The *dikpalakas* are distinguished guests to this grand celestial function. Indra is painted with numerous eyes all over his body. His two upper arms are holding each a five-pointed flaming *vajra*. *Vajra* is the weapon of Indra and symbolizes lightning. Agni with four arms and a crown of flames is dark complexioned. Yama, like Indra, is fair and carries a *danda*. Nairuti has a *dhatura* flower in one hand. Vayu, Kubera and Isana are painted only as royal personages, without their iconographic symbols for identification.

Then we come across a group of three ladies, one of whom is holding a small bowl, another a flat wide platter.

Vishnu is painted here in gray. He is holding the *sankha* and the *chakra,* his usual iconographic symbols. He is also wearing *vanamala,* an ever fresh garland of flowers, reaching down to the knees.

We see an unusual god painted beside Vishnu. This figure is repeated atleast twice in the large sculptures of the temple. This god has five faces and eight hands holding several weapons and symbols. It is locally called Viswabrahma or the chief architect of the universe. This figure is damaged and faded.

The next composition is a group of eight persons of which three figures are completely damaged. They all look like *rishis*. Three of them wear *jatas* and the others crowns. Perhaps they are *brahmarishis* and *rajarishis,* like those in the *kalyana mantapa,* arriving to witness the great celestial function.

In the last section of the panel is Parvati painted green and surrounded by six maids of honour. One of them is reading a book while another is playing a musical instrument. Some are holding sugar-cane and waving the *chamuras*. It is locally identified as Parvati listening to a musical discourse. The bow of Manmatha is sugar-cane, and it symbolises fertility. Perhaps the artist wanted to suggest the fructification of Siva's marriage. The figure of Parvati in this composition is damaged.

The one running round the central square of the *mantapa* is the *Kiratarjuneeya* panel and this episode from the *Mahabharata* is told vividly and dramatically. Its sides on the east and the west are about thirty-seven feet, the other two sides of the north and the south are only about twentythree feet. It is not uniformly wide, the narrowest side being only about three and a half feet, the widest about five feet four inches broad. This rectangle is a continuous single panel not divided either by a painted beam or a border.

The panel starts at the northern end of the eastern side of the square and proceeds clockwise till it reaches the eastern end of the northern side. In the first composition, we see Siva seated with his distinguished companions and devotees. Here he is painted as being fair with four hands and in tiger skin. In his upper hands are the *parasu* and the *saranga*. There are three devotees beside him and two of them have crowns on their heads and one is with a *jatabhara*. At Siva's feet is a short, thick figure with sharp white tusks, may be a *gana*. Beside Siva is another green figure with four arms holding a lotus or some flower not clear enough to identify. Locally it is called the figure of Vishnu.

The four companions of Siva here are Narada, Bhr'ngi, Nandi and Brahma. Narada is slightly stout, holding a small lotus in his right hand; Bhringi is dancing, as he is ever wont to do round Siva; Nandi has a human form with a bull's head. Brahma has three crowned heads with dark beards. The gods may be in consultation as they have come to know of the intense *tapas* of Arjuna.

In the next composition, we see Siva on his *vrishabha vahana* with Parvati, giving *darsan* or audience to a devotee. Siva is here followed by six attendants, two behind and four in front of him. They hold fly whisks and banners as the marks of Siva's royalty. They must be his *pramatha ganas*.

The devotee is painted here twice, in different attitudes. He is at full length prostrate on the ground in front of the deity and again he is seen beside Siva standing with the hands lifted high above his head and palms joined in *namaskara*. The devotee has his hair done in *jatas* and is wearing garlands of *rudraksha* beads. He must have been in arduous penance for a long time, waiting for Siva to present himself in form before him, and Siva on his way to Arjuna must have granted *darsan* to him.

The following scenes present the *tapas* of Arjuna and his epic fight with Siva. Arjuna is seen seated grim in penance on a small hillock in the centre of a thick forest. An anthill has sprouted around him. Poisonous serpents are playing around his body, as if he is an inanimate object. Several birds are anxiously watching this strange sight. The trees have started flowering and are even bearing fruit. This is significant with symbolic suggestion. Arjuna's intense *tapas* has touched nature and gods, and has started flowering and bearing fruit as the trees around.

Then we see three hunters, dressed all alike. They wear garments and crowns of leaves. Evidently it is Siva, Parvati and an attendant *gana*. Now the terrible demon boar enters the scene, black, huge and much out of proportion, dominating everything around. It has protruding tusks and is in tension, ready to face the coming dangerous ordeal. The artist has also painted three flying figures high above in the composition. Evidently, they are flying away in panic to escape from the unexpected terror which suddenly invaded the peaceful forest like a raging storm.

Once again the terrible giant boar and the three hunters make their appearance. The boar is driven by arrows shot from the bows of the hunters. The resident animals of the forest are already in panic and terror. The birds are interested and look upon the scene perched high above in the branches of trees. Deer and rabbits are fleeing in terror. Two parrots are painted watching the scene sitting in trees.

Several sages, inhabitants of the peaceful *ashramas* in the forest, are also affected by this rushing demon boar and are frightened. In one composition we see six of them evidently in commotion and panic because of this strange fearful demon. The boar shakes the entire forest like a rushing hurricane.

The southern side of the square panel adjacent and parallel to the *artha mantapa* continues the story of *Kiratarjuneeya*. Most of this part of the panel is damaged and not many figures are clear.

It begins with a composition in which Arjuna is seen standing on one foot between two large boulders on the side of a hill, evidently in intense *tapas*. His body has already become wasted and thin due to the long and arduous penance. Beside Arjuna, forms of two devotees are also painted.

The next scene presents the dead boar with an arrow sticking in its carcass. Two archers, evidently Arjuna and Siva, are on either side of it. The one in the front, near the head, is Arjuna and Siva is standing on the other side of the boar. Curiously enough, Arjuna is here seen wearing a *kirita*. Perhaps the artist wanted to emphasize his royal character. Four ravenous dogs with open fangs are in the act of spiringing at the boar.

The next composition shows Siva and Arjuna facing each other with drawn bows and Parvati beside Siva. Parvati is still in the guise of a huntress. The carcass of the dead boar is again between them; now lying on its back and its legs sticking up high in the air. Parvati is anxious. Perhaps she is worried about the battle now on between her husband and Arjuna.

Once again we see Siva and Arjuna, now engaged in a hand to hand fight. They have discarded all weapons. Later we see Siva fallen down, Arjuna standing above triumphant, and the worried Parvati keenly observing. Immediately after that, we see the culmination of the episode. In this composition we see Arjuna in two different attitudes. He is first seen standing and doing *namaskara* with joined palms to Siva and Parvati. Next he is shown fully prostrating before the divine couple.

The last scene in this part of the panel presents Siva and Parvati in their true forms on their *vahana nandi*. There are two pairs of *ganas,* one pair leading in front and another following from behind. They are holding umbrellas, a sign of royalty both in ancient and medieval times. Perhaps, having finished the task of testing Arjuna and granting boons to him, Siva and Parvati are repairing back to *Kailasa* in regal state as they had arrived. However, this part of the panel is much spoiled and nothing can be distinguished clearly.

The next part of the square panel which runs from north to south on the western side is damaged. However, pictures and compositions painted on this part of the panel have no relationship with the story of Kartaviryarjuna. They all seem to be representations of independent scenes cut from various ancient stories and legends.

The first composition presents Siva as Veerabhadra dressed in tiger skin, holding a flame in one of his upper hands and shooting flames from his hair and *kirita,* worshipped by a *rishi* and a woman. Then, a Saiva temple is presented in a conventional manner. Later we see a king giving away cattle to a Brahmin. The rest of the composition is damaged. But a single figure of a king can be distinguished. He is dark with many ornaments and a *jatamakuta*. He is locally identified as Arjuna, for Arjuna is described in the *Mahabharata* as dark and also referred to as *krishna* or the dark.

The last part of the square panel which is at the northern end, running east and west, also presents some scenes related to the story of *Kiratarjuneeya,* and thus establishes continuity with the rest of the panel. Here again we see Arjuna in *tapas*. This time with his *gandiva*. A *rishi* is also watching Arjuna. Next we see Siva in full form with his four hands, giving *darsan* to Arjuna. Arjuna is presented here again in two different attitudes, one standing and doing *namaskara,* and the other lying fully prostrate on the ground before Siva. Siva in one of his hands is holding a weapon in the shape of Indra's *vajra*. Perhaps it was intended by the artist as *pasupata,* for which Arjuna made penance. The rest of the panel is destroyed and damaged.

The next panel immediately beside the central square, to the west and running north-south, is famous as the *Bhukailas* panel and is about thirtyseven feet long and five feet wide. The story of *Bhukailas* illustrates that gods too make mistakes and take a good deal of trouble to retrieve. Ravana, the king of *Lanka,* after an arduous penance pleased Lord Siva and obtained the *atma linga* from him, but with a condition that the *linga* should never be placed on the ground before he reached *Lanka,* his domain. This *atma linga* would make Ravana invincible and at the same time immortal. So the other gods planned to wrest it away from Ravana.

Vinayaka, in the guise of a *brahmachari* minding cattle, met Ravana on the way. It was morning and Ravana had to do his ablutions and religious rites and requested the innocent looking bachelor to hold the *atma linga* for him. The bachelor was crafty and told Ravana that he was busy and would hold the *linga* for a short while and call for him thrice and if Ravana did not turn up he would place the *atma linga* on the ground and depart. Ravana accepted the terms and went a little way off to a spring for ablutions and religious rites. The crafty bachelor called Ravana thrice before he could begin his ablutions, placed the *atma linga* on the ground and vanished with his cattle. Ravana somehow finished his rites and returned in haste, only to find his precious *atma linga* embedded in the earth. He tried with all his strength to remove the *atma linga*. All his strength availed him not, and he had to go away disappointed, enraged at the trick played on him by the gods.

This panel, as also the next two panels, is to be viewed starting from the northern end to the south. The panel is much damaged and not distinctly visible. At the beginning we see a scene with Siva on Mount *Kailasa* with many gods and *rishis*. Mount *Kailasa* is painted conventionally. Perhaps the artist wanted to suggest that Ravana obtained the *atma linga* from Siva here. Then for some length, because of the damaged condition, nothing can be clearly discerned or made out. Almost to the end of the panel there is a composition dimly visible. In it a dark young boy, locally identified as Vinayaka, is interesting. He is seen here minding the cattle. Two or three forms of cows and bulls can also be seen. He must be there minding the cattle as Ravana arrived with the *atma linga* and requested him to take care of it while he was away to do his ablutions.

The next parallel panel is of the same length and also runs north-south. It is the widest of all the panels in the *mukha mantapa* being six feet and four inches wide. It is thoroughly spoiled and only one scene of Siva's *durbar* can faintly be discerned here.

The last panel on the western side running north-south is also short and of the same length as the first one on the eastern side but about five feet in width. It is interesting since scenes from the *Ramayana* are illustrated here. It is much damaged and no composition can clearly be discerned and we can find traces of about eight scenes presented here.

In the first composition the central figure is that of Rama with Hanuman resting at his feet. A lady, perhaps Sita, is standing beside Rama. A little further down is a dark figure, probably Sugriva standing in an attitude of *namaskara*. There are several monkeys, behind and by the side of him. Two of the monkeys have crowns on their heads. Two more forms of men seated as if conversing are also present. One of them evidently is a king for there are three attendants behind him. The other looks a sage.

The next scene is that of a dignified man seated, regal in appearance, addressing a man with a long bow before him. There are three attendants behind. The archer with a long bow has a *kirita* on his head. The context is not clear.

In the next scene there is a royal figure with a long bow addressing a *brahmachari*. The *brahmachari* is young and is carrying an umbrella in the customary manner. The artist probably wanted to illustrate the story of Lava and Kusa from the *Uttara Ramayana*. Yet the meaning is not clear, for between the *brahmachari* and the bowman, there are two humped bulls, one in white and another in brown.

In the next scene we see the bowman praying to a Siva *linga* in a small shrine painted conventionally. The next scene presents Lord Siva granting *darsan* to the archer. Siva has in the upper hands, a *damaruka* and a *trisula*. One of his lower hands is in *varada mudra*. The other lower hand is holding something not distinguishable. He is with a crown flashing flames and a garland of skulls reaching down to his feet. There is an attendant beside Siva. The rest of the composition is much damaged. Yet trace of forms of a *vimana* and a *nandi* can faintly be discerned. The artist perhaps wanted to suggest that Siva arrived there by *vimana,* the sky vehicle of the gods.

In the next scene we see a figure of a *yogi* and before him probably Indra, because the figure has royal dignity and also two attendants behind. He has a *vajra*-like object in his hands shooting flames. The next scene is on a hill with a group of trees. At the foot of the hill is an elaborate *vimana*. It is built in five tiers and has a spire on the top with six *dhwajas* or pennons decorating it. Inside, it has two seats facing each other, without occupants. The *vimana* is beautiful.

Next we see Indra again, painted green holding two *vajras* with shooting flames, in both of his upper hands. This painting is also much damaged but three of his attendants to his left, two to his right, and a sage can faintly be seen.

Once more we see a sage with a long bow and a quiver of arrows beside him, in hard penance beneath a tree, on the top of a hill. A few more trees are there on this hill. The *yogi* is represented as standing on one foot. A similar form of an archer is again painted. The artist perhaps meant to paint Nara and Narayana who were in *tapas,* and who in their later incarnations were Arjuna and Krishna. But nothing to support this view is found anywhere on this panel.

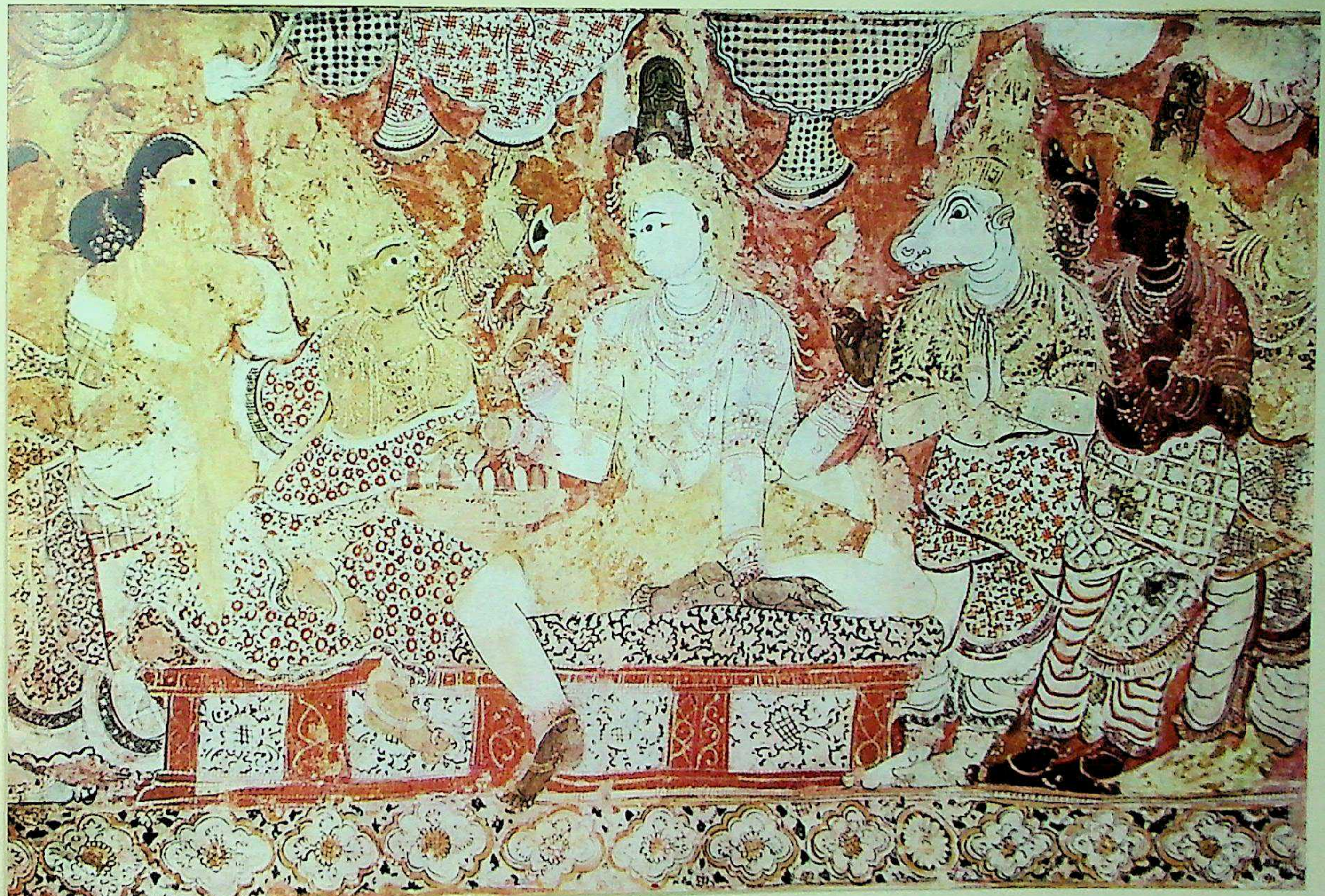
Again we see a sage. This sage has Indra before him. Indra here wears a *kirita* and has four arms. In both his upper arms he is holding *vajras*. One of the lower arms is in *upadesa mudra,* the gesture of teaching and the other in *abhaya mudra*.

A clear identification of all the scenes and the episodes illustrated on this panel is not possible as most of them are irreparably destroyed and defaced.

As the *mukha mantapa* acquaints and familiarises the devotee with the knowledge of gods and Siva, the *artha mantapa* actually prepares the devotee to enter the temple of Siva to commune with the deity, filling his mind and soul with *Sivatattwa,* the essence of Siva. Siva is conceived in Hindu mythology in innumerable forms, each expressing an individual aspect of Siva and *Sivatattwa*. The artist realises such forms iconographically to help the devotee in realising Siva and *Sivatattwa* and prepare him to commune with his god in a manner best suited him. In the *artha mantapa* of Lepakshi, fourteen different forms of Siva and one form of Devi are expressed in paintings iconographically, which the devotee can view, contemplate upon and enter the *garbha griha*.

The long and narrow panel on the ceiling of the *artha mantapa* runs eastwest along the entire length of the main shrine of the temple. The paintings here do not relate a story or episode, but illustrate iconographically the different manifestations of Siva, and a single form of Devi. They are to be viewed in an order, starting from the eastern end proceeding towards west.

Lingodbhava murthi: Once Brahma and Vishnu had an argument as to who was the architect and



PL. VII. RAVANA RECEIVING THE ATMA LINGA FROM SIVA : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

creator of the universe. The argument waxed hot and developed into a quarrel. Then Siva manifested himself as a *linga* of infinite proportions resembling the great cosmic fire with millions of tongues of flames blazing out. This sudden and awful manifestation at once put a stop to the raging quarrel between Brahma and Vishnu, and they became curious about the extent and origin of this great flaming *linga*. So Brahma took the form of a swan and flew up to discover the top end of the *linga*, while Vishnu assuming the form of a boar went down digging into the earth to explore its origin. Thus Siva manifested himself as Lingodbhava murti.

The presentation of Lingodhbhava murti here is not strictly according to the puranic legend. In this composition Siva is seen issuing out of the *linga* with four hands, the upper hands holding the *parasu* and a flame, the lower hands in *abhaya* and *varada mudras*. Brahma and Vishnu are not represented either as themselves or as a swan and a boar in this composition. Around the *linga*, several forms of devotees are painted.

Andhakasuradhwamsa murti: Andhaka, one of the sons of Kasyapa by his wife Diti, was a powerful king of the *asuras*. Through his austere penance he propitiated Brahma and got several boons. Owing to these boons he became invincible and worsted the gods at every step. Thereupon the gods approached Siva and complained to him of their woes. While Siva was listening to their troubles, Andhaka invaded *Kailasa* to carry away Parvati. This enraged Siva and he set out with his *ganas* to vanquish the *asura*. He struck the *asura* with an arrow and blood began to flow profusely from the wound. Each drop of blood as it touched the earth gave rise to another Andhaka demon. Thereupon Siva thrust his *trisula* into the body of the main Andhaka and began to dance. To stop the blood from falling on the earth Siva created *Sakti,* called Yogeswari, and many other *Saktis* or energies in female forms to catch all drops of blood as they fell from the demon and stop further multiplication of the secondary Andhakas.

Andhakasuradhwamsa murti is usually depicted as holding Andhakasura high, his body pinned to the point of a spear, while a form of Devi is collecting the blood flowing from the *asura* in a bowl. But here Siva has four hands. He is dressed in tiger skin, and tramples the demon whom he has pierced with his *trisula*. In his two upper hands there are the usual *parasu* and flame, while his lower hands are holding the spear with which he is pinning down the body of the *asura*. This indeed is an unusual representation of Andhakasuradhwamsa murti. But the painting is pleasing and expressive.

Dakshina murti: As teacher of *yoga,* music and other sciences, Siva is known as Dakshina murti. One account states that because he was seated facing south when he taught the *rishis, yoga* and *jnana,* he came to be called Dakshina murti.

Here he is painted as sitting on a rocky hill between two trees. Several devotees are seen around and one of them is holding a musical instrument. He is wearing a tiger skin and has four hands. The upper hands hold a flame and a cobra, while one of the lower hands holds a *danda,* the other rests on the knee in *dhyana mudra*. This too is an unusual representation of Dakshina murti.

Chendesanugraha murti: Chendesa is a *gana* of Siva. But before he was made a *gana,* he was a Brahmin boy in the south called Vichara sarma. Vichara sarma was tending the cows of a Brahmin. After Vichara sarma took to the minding of these cows, they began yielding unusually large quantities of milk. So the boy made Siva *lingas* of sand and used the extra milk of the cows to bathe them. Hearing this his father was furious that the boy was wasting the milk that belonged to another Brahmin, went to the place where the boy was bathing the *lingas* of sand with the milk, admonished him and kicked one of the *lingas*. The boy was enraged and cut off the legs of his father with the axe he was holding. Siva was pleased, appeared on the scene with Parvati, offered the boy his grace and made him a *gana*.

In this composition Siva is seen with a long garland of skulls and wearing a tiger skin. He has four hands. His upper hands are holding the *saranga* and the *parasu*, with one of his lower hands he is offering a *parasu* to Chendesa. The lower hand of Siva is in *dhyana mudra*. Chendesa is slightly bent forward with outstretched hands to receive the axe. The form of *gana* is seen between the forms of Siva and Chendesa. A number of devotees are painted as usual around the form of Siva.

Bhikshatana murti: Bhikshatana murti is the aspect of Siva as he went about begging for food to atone for the sin of *brahma hatya* with the skull of Brahma whose head he cut off.

Siva is seen here between two trees with Parvati standing beside him. A black dwarf, evidently one of his *ganas,* is carrying on his head a big bowl of food. By the side of Parvati, there is another lady filling the bowl of food with a ladle. Two devotees are painted to the right of Siva. *Nandi* here is like a gamboling calf. Several other devotees are also seen in the composition. The figure of Parvati is slightly damaged and is not clear.

Siva here has four hands. In his upper two hands, he is holding the *damaruka* and the *trisula*. One of his lower hands is holding a begging bowl and the other lower hand is loose. This is entirely different from the one presented in sculpture in the *mukha mantapa*. But it is equally beautiful and expressive.

Harihara murti: In the form of Harihara murti we see both Vishnu and Siva in one composite form for Hari is Vishnu, and Hara is Siva. It is related that Vishnu told a *rishi* that he and Siva were one and that in him resided Siva and manifested himself to the *rishi* in this dual aspect.

In this composition the right half of the figure is Hara and the left half Hari. This form also is painted with four hands, two for Hara and two for Hari. The Hara part is dressed in a tiger skin, while the Hari part wears a simple *dhoti*. In the hands of Hara we see the crescent moon and *abhaya mudra*. To emphasize the idea that Hari hara is a form of Siva, the artist painted the third eye, which is peculiar to Siva and not Vishnu.

A form of Siva: This form of Siva is iconographically not identifiable. He has his usual *kirita* on the head and is dressed in a tiger skin, has four hands holding the *parasu* and the *saranga* in his upper hands. One of his lower hands is across his chest. The form of a lady is also seen beside the form of Siva. One of her hands is hanging down, while the other is holding something which is not clear.

Ardha Nareewara: It is stated that Brahma first begot a number of male beings, the *Prajapatis* and commanded them to create various other beings. They were found unfit for the task and Brahma felt uneasy and contemplated on Maheswara. Siva appeared before Brahma in the composite form of half male and half female. At the sight of this form of Maheswara, Brahma realised his mistake and with the help of the female half of Siva, he created female forms and completed the act of creation.

Like the form of Harihara, Ardhanari too is a composite form of Siva, but one half in this case being male and the other half female. This painting is slightly damaged and not clear. But we can see that the left half of the figure with a big round breast is that of Parvati and the right half with a flat chest is that of Siva. This form too has four arms and three eyes. The right hands that belong to the Siva part hold the *parasu* and the *abhaya mudra*. The left hands that belong to the Parvati part hold the lotus and the *varada mudra*.

Kalyana sundara murti: After the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice and the death of Sati, Siva was lonely. An *asura* called Taraka caused great annoyance to the *devas*. So they wanted Siva to get married and beget a son who could destroy Taraka. Sati was by then born again as Parvati to Himavat. She was performing *vratas* to be joined to her lord once again. Induced by the *devas,* Kama, the god of love, tried his artifices on Siva and met his end. But Siva's mind was disturbed and he went in quest of Parvati in the guise of an old man. Parvati found him to be her lord and consented to marriage. The marriage of Siva and Parvati was celebrated by the gods with great joy and pomp.

Siva is called Kalyana sundara murti in the composition representing his marriage with Parvati. Here we see Siva, and Parvati with two maids beside her, Brahma, the officiating priest and an attendant. Siva here is painted in graceful form. He has four hands and a *kirita* on his head. He is wearing a tiger's skin. His upper arms carry his usual symbols, the *saranga* and the *parasu*. One of his lower arms is gracefully stretched holding Parvati's extended hand. His third eye is clearly visible and he has his usual ornaments. The figure of Parvati here is much smaller than that of Siva. She is looking modest as a Hindu bride should.

Tripurantaka murti: On one occasion, Siva killed three *asuras,* sons of Tarakasura. They lived in three forts constructed of metal, and caused great annoyance and damage to *suras* and *rishis*. Indra and the other gods found these demons invincible and sought the help of Siva. Siva demanded of all the gods one half of their powers which they freely parted with, and Siva then became Mahadeva. In this great act of conquest various gods served Mahadeva in various capacities. Vishnu became his arrow; Agni the barb; Yama the feather; Brahma the charioteer; Sun and Moon, his chariot wheels. Then Mahadeva made the *Vedas* his bow and Savitri his bow string, and destroyed the *asuras* of the metal castles.

Here Siva is seen attacking three *asuras* from his chariot. Brahma is seated in front as the charioteer. This chariot has three wheels and is painted similar to the one in the *mukha mantapa* which relates the story of the justice seeking cow. Siva has a large bow but the arrow which is already discharged is proportionately longer. In front of Siva, there are three fortresses, and Siva's arrow has pierced and gone right through all of them. The tip of the arrow is seen emerging out of the third fortress at the other end.

On the battlements of one of the fortresses we see the form of an *asura* trying to escape. Siva's bow string in this composition is the great five-headed serpent Vasuki. A couple of badly painted horses draw the chariot. Several of the usual devotees complete the scene.

Gauri prasadaka murti: This represents a well known incident wherein Siva begged Parvati of grace as she had been angered by the arrival of *Ganga,* his second wife. Here, figures of Parvati and Siva are painted remarkably well. Siva is with his usual four hands, the lower hand gently caressing Parvati, begging pardon. Behind Siva flows down the waters of *Ganga,* with fish, flowers and snakes. The usual group of devotees are present to complete the picture.

Nataraja: Siva is a great master of dance. He is painted here dancing, fair with his *kirita* with moon and sun painted on either side of his crown. He has four arms. The upper two arms are holding the *damaruka* and a flame. The lower left hand is stretched loosely and gracefully across his chest in *gaja hasta* attitude. In this attitude the hand is fully stretched with grace like the trunk of an elephant and so called *gaja hasta.* The lower right hand is hidden by the stretched left hand. Perhaps it is in *abhaya mudra*. He has a long garland of skulls which is unusual in such compositions. This picture too has forms of devotees painted.

Vrisha vahana murti: One of the favourite modes in which Siva is represented in sculpture and painting is Vrisha vahana murti which is Siva seated upon the bull, his carrier.

Siva and Parvati are shown here seated on *nandi*. There are a number of *ganas* at the feet of *nandi,* and a few *devas* are seen floating among the clouds. Four devotees are doing obeisance in front of Siva and Parvati.

The figures of *ganas* are typical in this composition. They are spirited. Even *nandi* in this composition shows great spirit. The position of his legs suggests arrested motion. Siva here has four hands. His upper hands are holding his usual symbols, and his lower hands are held forward blessing the devotees. Parvati is seated behind him on the bull. She is painted darker than Siva, holding a lotus flower in her hand.

The devotees in this composition are particularly well drawn and have pleasing forms.

Standing form of Siva: This again is an unidentified form of Siva. Here he is standing erect. He has four arms and is wearing a tiger skin, his usual *kirita* and several garlands. His upper arms hold the usual symbols and the lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varada* poses. The sun and the moon are painted on either side of his crown. There are also three figures of devotees painted as floating in the clouds on both sides of Siva. The form of Siva in this composition is indeed very graceful and full of beauty.

A seated Devi: This is the last figure visible in the panel since the further part of the panel is completely damaged and defaced. This figure defies all attempts at identification iconographically. Yet she is perfect and one of the most beautiful women painted not only in this temple but in the whole of Indian art. This form rivals *Prajna Paramita* which, many critics say, represents the ideal form of Hindu womanhood.

She is painted in blue. One of her hands is holding a lotus, while the other is gracefully bent with fingers stretched and bent downwards. She is seated in *padmasana* on a beautiful *pitha*. Adorned with several jewels and garlands she looks beautiful and dignified.

The paintings in this panel, though clear are not as bright as those on the panels of the *mukha mantapa.* They are not in violent or visible motion as those of the *mukha mantapa*, but have a sense of classical repose, vibrant with internal movement. In fact they are all meant and executed as simple icon to draw the attention and undisturbed concentration of the devotee. So they are both static and dynamic at once, as the very universe which is but a reflection of God and appears static, but fully active with dynamic internal movement.

PAINTING IN THE GARBHA GRIHA

The *garbha griha* consists of different cells for different gods and goddesses and a huge roof combines all of them into one unified temple complex. Originally ceilings of all cells and most of the walls seem to have been painted. But a large part of the wall painting in this temple is damaged and defaced. At present we can see paintings on the main hall ceiling, the passage behind the *sukanasi,* a few paintings on the walls of the main hall, on the ceiling of the *sayanagara* and the ceiling of the passage to it, and lastly on the ceiling of Raghunathalaya.

As one enters the *garbha griha,* one is forced to view the gigantic and all-imposing panel of Veerabhadra on the ceiling at a height of fifteen and a half feet. It is a huge rectangular panel measuring about twenty-five feet into fourteen feet. This remains perhaps the hugest single painting in Asia. On the top of the figure of Veerabhadra, to the northern side, a transverse narrow rectangle within the panel, in a comparatively small scale are figures of Siva and Parvati attended by several *devas*. A similar panel at the bottom shows all *dikpalakas* on their *vahanas*. There is Indra on an elephant; Agni on a ram; Yama on a buffalo; Varuna on a *makara;* Vayu on a deer; Kubera on a horse; Isana on a bull; and Niruti on a man. Lack of proper light, and also the immense height present some difficulty in viewing them.

The painting of Veerabhadra is interesting and awe inspiring, not only for its sheer size but also for its very look which is quite different from all the other icon paintings of the temple. Veerabhadra is presented here in profile, not in full front view as many other icons of the temple. This painting is mostly in gray, with strong, evenly flowing black lines all over, and can be called a symphony in gray, as Whistler called one of his masterpieces. The very technique employed in this painting singles it out from other paintings of Lepakshi. In this great painting the drawing is strong, the colour subdued and it acquires the appearance of a gigantic figure floating in and dominating the whole sky. Though no physical and outward movement is attempted in this painting, it is internally dynamic. This is achieved by the innumerable rhythmic, dark, evenly flowing lines on gray, which cover the entire picture, detailing and illuminating every part. This remains a masterpiece of all time in Indian art, not simply by its size, but by the original treatment given by the unknown immortal artist of Lepakshi.

At the bottom of the figure of Veerabhadra, we can see Virupanna with his family in the attitude of doing obeisance to the deity. This small but significant detail imparts a touch of realism and depth to this picture and the whole panel pulsates with life and dynamic internal movement.

The entire composition is covered by a beautifully painted border of textile design.

The ceiling of the corridor behind the *sukanasi* which runs east-west, has at least three compositions visible. This ceiling is only eleven feet and four inches in height and the paintings can be clearly examined. In the first composition Veerabhadra, in the second Siva and in the third Vishnu are worshipped by several ladies. The whole panel is bordered with a beautiful textile design.

Paintings on the ceiling of the corridor to the east of the *sukanasi* are thoroughly spoilt but traces of paintings can be discerned on all the walls of the *sukanasi.*

On the back walls of the *sukanasi* is painted the story of Muchikunda. Muchikunda was the *mandhatri.* He rendered assistance to the *devas* and obtained a boon of uninterrupted sleep and whosoever disturbed him was to be burnt to ashes by the fire issuing out of his body. Kalayavana was lured into this cave by Krishna. Kalayavana mistaking Muchikunda for Krishna in the darkness woke him and was burnt to ashes.

But the painting on the wall is thoroughly spoiled and no picture is distinguishable.

A famous composition called "Hoy Sala" is painted on the eastern wall of the main hall, near the Durga pillar. It relates the legend of the first Hoyasala of the Hoyasala dynasty in a continuing composition.

Here, a raja is seen hunting a spotted cheetah. The cheetah enters the *ashrama* of the *rishi* and tries to bite off the head of a boy. We see the form of a commanding *rishi* standing beside. In the next composition a boy stabbing and killing the cheetah is seen. The legend states that the *rishi* called the boy and said "Hoy Sala". 'Hoy' meant kill and 'Sala' was the name of the boy. Later the boy became a local king and thus started the line of Hoyasala kings, famous in the history of south India. A part of the panel presents a king and a number of ladies worshipping Siva. Perhaps he was the boy who killed the cheetah and later became a king.

All the paintings on this panel are discoloured, and are almost indistinguishable.

PAINTINGS IN THE SAYANAGARA

The entrance to the *sayanagara* is a narrow passage which takes a right angle turn, dividing it into two sections. The ceiling of this passage is also illuminated with paintings. Three separate panels can be distinguished on the ceiling.

One panel is painted with a simple decorative design of the lotus motif. Another panel has a picture of Siva seated on a low *pitha*. Traces of two forms of ladies and a tree in the background can be observed.

The third panel presents a slightly preserved figure of Siva in the aspect of Ardha nariswara, with four devotees to the right and six to the left. An elliptic *prabhavali* in black can also be noted. In this composition too, as in the one on the *artha mantapa,* the right side represents Siva and the left Parvati. Siva's half wears a tiger skin and Parvati's half is in a saree reaching down to the knee. The third eye of Siva is very clear. Ardha nariswara has four arms, the upper hands hold the usual symbols and the lower hands are in the usual attitudes of *varada* and *abhaya mudras.*

The devotees include sages in leopard skins and the young ladies. They are all dressed in sarees and wear ornaments of the Vijayanagar period. The walls of the passage also seem to have been painted originally. But all those paintings have today disappeared leaving only a few traces.

The *sayanagara* is a dark chamber behind the cell of Parvati. A big natural boulder of a rock forms one side of the chamber because of which the chamber could not attain the shape of a perfect square, but a sort of a rectangle. The roof of the chamber is divided into three separate panels by beams which are painted. The ceiling is low, being about eleven feet high, and the paintings can be viewed comfortably.

On this ceiling five distinct compositions can be seen. The first represents a Siva *linga,* worshipped by a *pujari* and a monkey with a *kirita,* probably Hanuman, in a beautifully erected *mantapa*. The *mantapa* with pillars, enteblatures and even a *vimana* presents a typical example of Vijayanagar architecture. In the background, a hill is conventionally painted. Above the *mantapa* a few clouds are painted. In them a couple of figures, probably *devas* are seen in attitudes of adoration.

The second composition contains forms of Siva and Parvati sitting close. This is a motif repeated continuously on the ceiling of the *sayanagara*. The *sayanagara* is a sleeping chamber.

In this composition, along with Siva and Parvati, there is a maid in attendance. A flying *vimana* is also present. Siva has four hands and three eyes. One of his upper hands is holding a *parasu*. The other hand is gracefully held up to Parvati. One of his lower hands is in *upadesa mudra* and the other hand is left gracefully hanging down. Parvati is seen seated close to Siva with legs crossed and the left hand is stretched caressing the hand of Siva. Iconographically this kind of representation of Siva and Parvati may be called Umamaheswara murti.

The next composition is that of a seated Devi. She is of dark complexion and seated on a low *pitha.* We can see the figure of Siva beside the figure of Devi. A number of ladies are also painted attending upon her. This painting is partly damaged and spoiled.

In the next composition also, we see forms of Siva and Parvati seated close together with several ladies in attendance. On one side there are forms of two maids painted, while on the other, six ladies are visible. They are all fairly clear and distinguishable.

The last composition is also that of Parvati and Siva together, with several attending maids on both sides. The figure of Parvati is fairly well preserved, but that of Siva is much damaged.

Here too all the panels have painted borders. Even the walls of the *sayanagara* have appearance of having been originally painted. But they are all damaged and defaced.

PAINTINGS IN THE RAGHUNATHALAYA

The shrine of Raghunathalaya is a complete temple in itself with three separate parts. The main cell far behind, where the icons for worship are installed, is the *garbha griha.* In the front is an anteroom called *antarala,* and the third part is the *mantapa.* The ceiling of the *mantapa* which is a square, twenty feet by twenty feet, is divided into nine equal square panels by cross beams. There are seven *avataras* of Vishnu on these panels.

Matsya *avatara:* This is the 'fish' incarnation. Vishnu in this *avatara* saved Vaivaswata, the seventh *manu* and progenitor of human race from destruction by a deluge. A small fish came into the hands of the *manu* and sought his protection. He carefully guarded it. It grew rapidly until nothing but an ocean could contain it. The *manu* then recognised the deity and worshipped the Vishnu incarnate. The God appraised the *manu* of the approaching catastrophe and made him prepare for it. When it came the *manu* embarked on a ship with *rishis* and seeds of all living things. Vishnu then appeared as the fish with a stupendous horn. The ship was bound to the horn with the great serpent Vasuki, and was secured in safety until the waters subsided. This is one of the *avataras.*

Matsya *avatara* is painted here as half man, half fish, the upper part that of man and the lower part that of fish. The colour of the deity here is that of bronze blue, indeed a rare colour at Lepakshi.

The deity has four arms and bears the *sankha* and the *chakra* in his two upper hands. The form is fully decorated with jewels.

Garuda and Hanuman are painted on both sides of the deity. Garuda is the vehicle of Vishnu. He is represented here not in his original form of an eagle, but in the anthropomorphic form. He can be recognised by his beak-like nose. There is also a devotee painted beside Hanuman.

Kurma *avatara:* Kurma is a tortoise. Vishnu appeared in the form of a tortoise in *satya yuga* and recovered the *amrita,* Lakshmi, Rambha, Dhanvantari and many other valuable things which had been lost in the deluge.

The painting of Kurma *avatara* is well preserved. Like the previous one this also is painted as half man and half tortoise. Several jewels and ornaments decorate the form.

The devotees on either side of this form are dressed like Vaishnavas. The Vaishnava cast mark on their foreheads is quite clear and prominent.

Varaha *avatara:* A demon called Hiranyaksha dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea. To recover it, Vishnu assumed the form of a boar, slew the demon and raised the earth.

The painting of this *avatara* is very much damaged. Only a few traces are perceptible. A couple of devotees are also painted here.

Narasimha *avatara:* It is the man-lion form assumed by Vishnu to deliver the world from the tyranny of Hiranya Kasipu, a demon king. Hiranya Kasipu became invulnerable by the boons of Brahma, and became secure from gods, men and animals. The king's son Prahlada worshipped Vishnu. This so enraged and incensed Hiranya Kasipu, that he tried to kill him. But all his efforts and attempts went futile. Arguing with Prahlada about the omnipresence of Vishnu, Hiranya Kasipu demanded to know if Vishnu was present in a stone pillar in the hall and struck it violently with his sword. To avenge Prahlada and vindicate his existence, Vishnu came forth from the pillar as Narasimha and tore the arrogant Hiranya Kasipu to pieces.

The painting of Narasimha here is fairly well preserved. In this painting Narasimha is not presented as tearing the entrails of Hiranya Kasipu but serene and calm in the attitude of *yoga*. This form of Narasimha is iconographically known as *Yoga* Narasimha, popular during the Vijayanagar period. This picture is beautifully rendered.

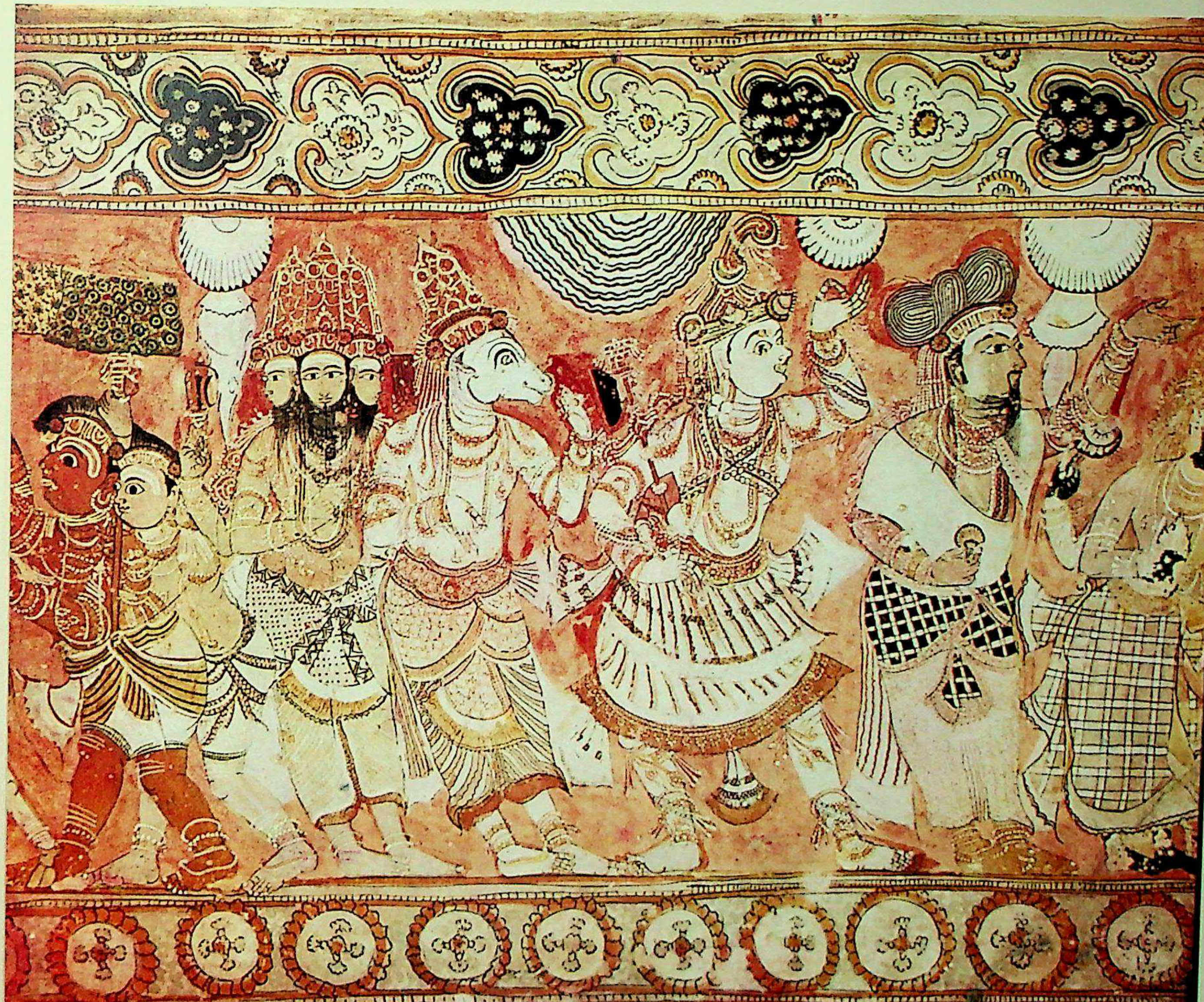
Vamana *avatara:* The Vamana *avatara* is famous for 'the three strides'. In *treta yuga,* King Bali had acquired domination over all the three worlds by his devotion and austerities, and so the gods were shorn of all their power and dignity. To remedy this, Vishnu assumed the form of a dwarf brahmin boy, appeared before Bali and begged him as much land as he could step over and cover in three paces. The generous monarch complied with his request. Vishnu then took two strides covering the heaven and the earth. He then took the third stride by placing his foot on the head of Bali driving him to *patala* or the nether world. Vishnu, with great respect for Bali's virtues left the domain of *patala* to him.

The painting of Vamana is thoroughly spoiled. But some traces of the head of Vamana and the *chatra* he carried can be discerned. Forms of two devotees, one wearing a *kirita* and the other *jatabhara* can be clearly distinguished.

Parasurama *avatara:* Parasurama was born in the *treta yuga* as the son of Jamadagni to deliver the brahmins from the arrogant domination of the *kshatriyas*. Kartaviryarjuna, a *kshatriya* king, paid a visit to the hermitage of Jamadagni and was hospitably entertained. But when the king departed, he carried off the *kamadhenu* belonging to Jamadagni. This act enraged Parasurama and he pursued Kartaviryarjuna, cut off his thousand arms and killed him. The sons of Kartaviryarjuna in retaliation killed Jamadagni. Parasurama vowed vengeance against them and the whole of the *kshatriya* race. He cleared the earth of *kshatriyas* twentyone times and filled with their blood the large lakes of *samanta panchaka*.

The panel of Parasurama is very much damaged and nothing can be distinguished therein.

Rama *avatara:* Rama was born in the *treta yuga* as the son of king Dasaratha and destroyed the ten-



Pl. VIII. GODS ATTENDING SIVA'S MARRIAGE : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

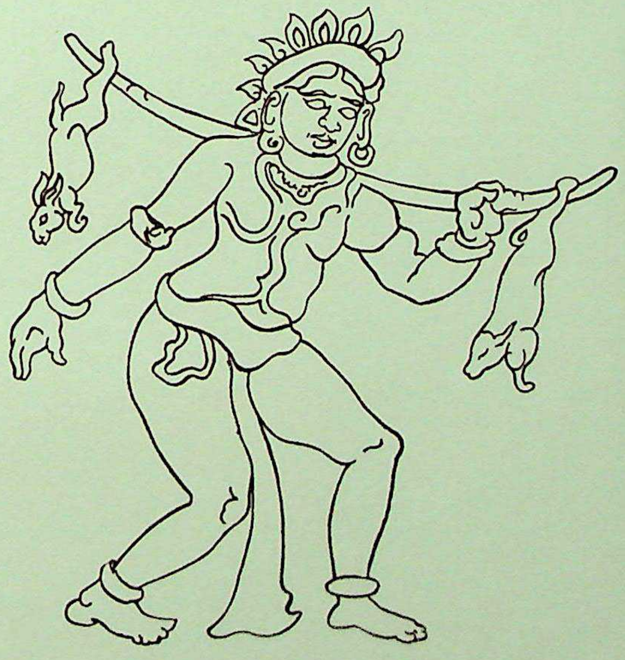
headed demon king Ravana.

Rama is painted in the central panel. Even this panel is very much damaged. Here he is seen seated with Sita and has four hands. His upper hands are holding the *sankha* and the *chakra*. One of his lower hands is in the attitude of *abhaya mudra*. His left hand goes round Sita in a fond embrace. The figure of Sita is gracefully drawn. Rama is rarely represented with four hands.

This central panel is very much damaged. No form is completely discernible. Only a few traces are left to contemplate on the original painting and its quality.

The rest of the two panels on this ceiling are left bare. Even as the *kalyana mantapa,* perhaps the painting of the temple had suddenly to be abandoned due to the circumstances beyond the control of the builders of the temple.

The Lepakshi temple is a magnificent tribute to Vijayanagar art and the art of India. The grandeur of the saffron coloured bodies, the antimony mixed collyrium painted hazel eyes of brunettes, the foreheads illuminated with sandal paste aspersing the aroma of musk and Indian perfume, of the genre and mythological themes, not withstanding the iconographical rigidity, the element of nativity, an art great and yet different from that of Ajanta, these make the paintings and sculptures of Lepakshi unique. It was a glorious period when art and literature received the magnanimous and unlimited patronage of the rulers of Vijayanagar at a time when the Hindu religion was in danger of extinction and had to take a defensive attitude.



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NOTES ON PLATES

COLOUR PLATES

Plate I (Frontispiece)
A view of the Lepakshi temple from within the enclosure. The gopura is left unfinished with only two stories having been constructed. The mantapa which formed the third and final enclosure is in ruins. The rich mantapa on the left is attached to the second enclosure. Note the characteristic composite pillars of Vijayanagar period and the rich sculptures on the unfinished gopura.

Plate II
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Portraits of Veeranna and Virupanna, the donor brothers of the temple with two attendants behind them. Note the characteristic popping eyes, and the style, derived not from iconography, but from the folk art of that period. The conical headgear is characteristic of the period and can also be observed in the sculpture of Krishnadevaraya at Tirupathi. The brothers and the attendants are in the attitude of worship, so do not wear shoes.

Plate III
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Three maids in attendance of Siva. Note the peculiar hair style decorated with flowers. The textile designs of the sarees are noteworthy. The ornaments that decorate the hair and other parts are characteristic of that period. They continued to be so in south India upto the beginning of this century.

Plate IV
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Several maids are in attendance of Parvati, the spouse of Siva. Note the varied hair styles and ornaments. The textile designs of the sarees are rich and varied. They indicate both the richness of imagination of the artist and the craftsmanship of the weaver of that period.

Plate V
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Siva hunting the boar. Note the characteristic popping eyes. Only the hind part of the boar can be seen. Parvati is seen at a distance, observing the hunt. The rest of the figures are pramatha ganas in disguise. Siva and his followers are wearing rich jewels, a sign of royalty of the period. But the story in the Mahabharata states that Siva comes in the guise of a kirata. The artist here has taken the liberty to achieve a rich effect. Even the forest is painted in a rich, decorative manner.

Plate VI
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. This too is a scene continuing the boar hunt of Siva. This is the illustration of an episode from the story of Kiratarjuniya in the Mahabharata. Here the form of the boar is enlarged to emphasize its fearsome character. The left part of the picture has several figures of rishis in panic. The boar threw the whole forest and its inhabitants into a state of turmoil and fear. In the lower right hand corner Siva is seen discharging an arrow. Even the rishis wear ornaments. The artist took this liberty to achieve a rich decorative effect. The forest too is decoratively painted.

Plate VII
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. It is the illustration of an episode from Bhukailas. Ravana is receiving Atmalinga from Siva on Mount Kailasa. Note the peculiar form of Siva's jatamakuta which repeats itself in all the paintings of Siva at Lepakshi. Hayagriva and another attendant are to the left of Siva. In the left of the composition are two lady forms painted. One of them is Parvati, being shocked as Siva bestows the gift. The lady behind her, painted dark, might be an attendant.

Plate VIII
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Gods attending Siva's marriage, led by a rishi. Note the peculiar style of the rishis' hair dress. This style of hair dressing is often repeated in Lepakshi sculptures and paintings. Indra dressed as a prince, Hayagriva with his horse-face and Brahma with his three faces form the centre of this composition. Two attendants of Siva, called pramatha ganas, distinguished by their dwarf-like appearance are at the left end of the picture. They are facing the opposite side. Perhaps they are receiving the other gods arriving to attend the marriage.

MONOCHROME PLATES

Plate IX
Sculpture on one of the pillars in the unfinished Kalyana mantapa.
A rishi on a journey,to attend the marriage of Siva and Parvati. He is carrying a kamandalu in his left hand and an umbrella in the right. The style is not iconographical but followed folk art tradition and the artist could achieve movement, a characteristic of the art of Vijayanagar period. The rishi is walking fast but his closed eyes suggest dhyana. In spite of the fast motion a sense of classical repose is felt because of the extreme calm suggested in the face of the rishi.

Plate X
Painting on the ceiling of the Garbha griha, of Veerabhadra, executed on a grand scale. It is of 12½ feet length and is perhaps the largest, single wall-painting in the world. Siva assumed the form of Veerabhadra to destroy the sacrifice of Daksha, for he was not invited, and also that his spouse was insulted. The painting is impressive, for in addition to the massiveness of the figure, the terrible expression achieved both in the face by the characteristic popping eye and the terror striking flowing curves which dominate the picture. The whole picture is done in gray and black, achieving an austere and terrible aspect.

Plate XI
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Siva in Bhukailas story. A male follower is present behind him, probably one of the pramatha ganas, and two women to the left of him. The women could be Parvati and one of her lady attendants. The pramatha gana is painted in a darker shade and is waving a fly-whisk over the head of Siva. A look of expectation is maintained on the face of Siva, perhaps, expecting Ravana's arrival. Note the peculiar hair dressing which is so different from the jatamakuta painted generally in all the Lepakshi figures.

Plate XII
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. An episode from the story of Manucholan.
Siva is seen arriving along with his spouse Parvati, riding on his bull carrier nandi, and restoring the dead calf to life. King Manucholan and his son are seen with a follower behind them to the left of the picture. The follower is hailing Siva while the king and his son are depicted in an attitude of devotion. Siva has also his followers in front of nandi. The followers are painted in dark tints to emphasize the importance of characters in the drama. Siva's gesture of varada mudra slightly differs from iconographic rules as the painter followed the folk style.

Plate XIII
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. An episode from the story of Manucholan.
The painting is slightly defaced, yet enough remains to proclaim its powerful characterisation. The cow is seen accosting the king and accusing his son of causing the death of her calf by recklessly driving the chariot. One person is seen beside the cow advocating her cause with his right hand raised in a powerful gesture. Attendants, two of whom are painted darker than the rest, are seen gesticulating as if to calm down the frenzy of the gathered mob.

Plate XIV
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. Siva granting darsan to Arjuna.
Arjuna is painted here in two attitudes. In the first, he is standing, doing namaskara, in the second he is prostrate, worshipping the feet of Siva. Siva is painted dark and is holding the celestial weapon Pasupata in one of his hands. It is to be understood that he is going to bestow the Pasupata to Arjuna. A rishi is painted on the left side of the picture, facing the other side. Perhaps he is calling the other rishis to view this wonderful scene. Note the form of the Pasupata, which is a conventional form of vajra, the weapon of Indra.

Plate XV
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa. A rishi greeting Siva and Parvati riding on the carrier bull. The rishi is painted in two attitudes. In one, he is standing in an attitude of prayer raising his hands in namaskara. In the second attitude he is lying prostrate, worshipping, at the feet of nandi. There are several followers of Siva one of whom is holding a flag. Note the form of the jatamakuta, which is almost conventionalised in all the paintings of Lepakshi.

NOTES ON PLATES

Plate XVI
A painting on the ceiling of the Garbha griha in the interior of the temple.
Note the purity of flowing lines and the spiritual beauty achieved in the expression of the face and the pose.

Plate XVII
Painting on the ceiling of the Ranga mantapa with a group of rishis and ladies. The ladies are leading the group. Two rishis are engaged in conversation. Perhaps they are discussing the purpose for which they are all going.

Plate XVIII
Painting on the ceiling of Raghunathalaya in the interior of the temple.
It is Yoga Narasimha attended by Bhaktas.
It is to be noted that representations of Yoga Narasimha became very popular during the Vijayanagar period. Many sculptures of Yoga Narasimha can be seen all over Andhra, sculptured during the period. The painting is defaced, but has attained great force and power, for the artist has abandoned the iconographic canons and followed the folk style.

Plate XIX
The famous bull of Lepakshi.
It is the biggest monolithic bull sculpture in India. The other three famous bulls are at Tanjore, Mysore and Bangalore. The bull measures twentyseven feet in length and fifteen feet in height. The Ganda Bherunda, insignum of Vijayanagar, can be seen sculptured in one of the chains hanging down his neck. Ganda Bherunda is a double-headed eagle. It is a freak of history that the double-headed eagle was the insignum of the emperors of Rome, Takshasila, Vijayanagar and the Kaiser of Germany.

Plate XX
A pillared cloister in the temple. Note the composite pillar typical of Vijayanagar architectural style. Here the Pallava vyali, so bold at Mahabalipuram is reduced to a relief carving. Huge mantapas and monolithic pillars are characteristic of Vijayanagar period.

Plate XXI
The famous Nagalinga of the Lepakshi temple. It measures eighteen feet in height.
It is the biggest monolithic naga sculpture in India.

Plate XXII
Two towers on the roof of the composite temple. They closely follow the Pallava style of Mahabalipuram. These vimanas indicate the position of various gods installed in the temple. Their forms are reduced and atrophied, which was also a characteristic of Vijayanagar temple architecture.

Plate XXIII
Pillars of the unfinished Kalyana mantapa. Note the conventional rishi figures in front of the composite pillars. The sculptures are still sharp with rich detail and have a look of freshness as if done recently. It is interesting to observe the virtuosity of the carvers in the figures of these rishis and the rest of the figures in the Kalyana mantapa.

Plate XXIV
Pillars of the Ranga mantapa on the eastern front. On the foreground pillar the vyali is pronounced. The rest of the composite pillars have four smaller pillars carved into them at the centre. Several temples of Vijayanagar period have pillars carved in this manner.

Plate XXV
A view of the Kalyana mantapa, with a wall and an arched entrance attached. Note the ogee arch, result of the Muslim architecture. The arch is yet a lintel construction, and followed the structural principle of traditional Hindu arches. It is towered by a Pallava Bodu or capital, proclaiming the heredity from which the Vijayanagar style has been evolved.

Plate XXVI
Sculpture of Ganga on the jamb of the huge gateway. It is three and a half feet high and impressive. Ganga is standing on a makara and is holding a creeper in the conventional manner. Note the elongation of the form of Ganga, a characteristic of Andhra sculpture. Note the rich detail of ornaments, another characteristic of Vijayanagar sculpture.

Plate XXVII

A sculpture in the Ranga mantapa.

It is popularly known as the Lata sundari of Lepakshi. It is only one foot nine inches high. Superb grace is achieved in the free flowing curves. The sculpture is carved on the base of a pillar in the Ranga mantapa.

Plate XXVIII

A sculpture on one of the pillars of the Ranga mantapa. Its height is one foot six inches.

The shepherd relaxing by resting his chin on a stick while tending his flock is a common sight in the whole of India since ancient times. In this piece of sculpture the sculptor is not hampered by any iconographic conventions. He does it in free hand and achieves a naturalistic effect rarely found in the medieval sculpture of south India.

Plate XXIX

Flying Gandharvas on the plinth of the temple. Its height is about two feet.

The flying gandharva was a fascinating subject to the artist of ancient times in India. Even at Ajanta, several groups of flying gandharvas can be seen. But the form and function of these figures are varied. At Ajanta they either greet the Buddha or fly in ecstasy and here they fly with the temple on their shoulders. The conventionalised crowns and ornaments in this sculpture are interesting.

Plate XXX

Detail of a flying gandharva, sculptured on the plinth of the temple.

Plate XXXI

The famous sculpture of Bhikshatana murti in the Ranga mantapa. Owing to a curse Siva goes all over the world, as a beggar and becomes Bhikshatana murti followed by one of his ganas carrying the begging bowl. In this composition a rishi kanya is seen serving food with a ladle into the begging bowl. It is said that this beautiful form of Siva bewitched all the ladies on earth. The lady giving food here has her robe slipping down her legs, as she fell in love with the beautiful form of Siva. This sculpture is executed in a classical manner; but the addition of the rishi kanya was the liberty taken by the artist. With this simple artifice the sculptor achieved not only grandeur but also a humorous effect.

Plate XXXII

A sculpture in the Ranga mantapa.

An unidentified five-headed god playing the drum. Iconography laid down many rules for the sculptural forms of gods. But Sukra in his Neetisara said that the artist is at liberty to follow or deviate from the rules. This five-headed god is the creation of a sculptor, who must have been a master. This god is playing the drum to the dance of Siva.

Note the perfection of form and the detail which does not conflict with or hamper the flow of form.

Plate XXXIII

A sculpture on one of the pillars of the Ranga mantapa. It is a representation of one of the ganas of Siva. He is holding a sword and shield, in the fashion of the foot-soldier of the Vijayanagar army and it is only the form of the hair that distinguishes him from the common soldier. Note the stylisation of the figure and the style of the hair dressing.

Plate XXXIV

Sculpture of the famous Rambha in the Ranga mantapa. It is nearly lifesize, with the height at four feet nine inches. She is on the form of a makara which means that the artist might have intended here to represent Ganga. Yet she is dancing and wearing ornaments like a queen.

Note the perfect proportions, the exact detail and the elongated graceful form. It is indeed a masterpiece of medieval Indian sculptor's art and has become famous as Rambha, the most graceful of celestial dancers.

Plate XXXV

A sculpture on the parapet wall on the side of a staircase to the east of the Ranga mantapa. Since ancient times the Indian artist is known for his portrayal of elephants. Elephant forms can be seen in the paintings of Ajanta, at Mahabalipuram and many other places. In this, the sculptor has once again proved his high reputation. Tremendous tension, force and life are achieved by the artist selecting an unusual pose of the baby elephant tucking at a creeper.

Plate XXXVI
A sculpture on one of the pillars of the Ranga mantapa. Its height is two feet.
This is another stylised form of Yoga Narasimha. But all the iconographic details and symbols such as the number of hands, the sankha and the chakra are missing. As Sukra said an artist can have his freedom. Note the abstracted and stylised form of makara torana on the top of the head.

Plate XXXVII
Monkey eating fruit: A sculpture on a pillar of the Ranga mantapa.
Note the peculiar way of rendering the hair on the body of the monkey. This sort of naturalism was not achieved even at Mahabalipuram.

Plate XXXVIII
A sculpture of a frieze on a pillar of the Ranga mantapa. Height: One foot nine inches.
Note the abstraction which gives it a modern look.

Plate XXXIX
A sculpture of another tree on a pillar of the Ranga mantapa. The stylisation here is no less beautiful than that of the other tree.

Plate XL
A sculpture in the interior of the temple. Nearly lifesize, with a height of four feet and nine inches, it is sculptured as Caryatid holding the structure above her head with her hand and dancing. It is famous now as the Padmini jati stree of Lepakshi. The beauty of form, the controlled movement, the flowing rhythm and the beauty of the face and form must have led the people to call her Padmini jati stree, or the woman of perfect beauty and character. It is a masterpiece of medieval Indian sculpture.

Plate XLI
Side view of the Padmini jati stree.
Note the serenity and dignity of pose.

Plate XLII
Sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Here Ganesa is remarkably sculptured. This figure is both iconographically perfect and aesthetically satisfying. Its height is three feet four inches.
Note the ornamental detail.

Plate XLIII
Sculpture of Parvati on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is four feet.
This piece is treated romantically and has an alluring beauty and aesthetic expression. The sculpture has retained its original sharpness and speaks of the quality of the stone used in the temple.

Plate XLIV
Sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is one foot three inches.
It is a representation of a Kinnara. Artists in India represented Kinnaras from ancient times.
Representations of Kinnaras, half man and half bird, have changed their form with the passage of time. The Kinnara here has an ornamental plumage comparable to the plumages at Ajanta.

Plate XLV
A sculpture on a pillar in the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is twelve inches.
He is a warrior holding a sword in his right hand and a shield in his left hand. Many soldiers of the Vijayanagar days used joined deer horns in the shape of a crescent moon for a shield. It was light and could stop sword blows. But his armour and other dress were probably derived from ancient sculptures. The vigour of the warrior is obvious in the form.

Plate XLVI
A sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is one foot two inches.
A lady completing her toilet. Note the metallic round mirror in her left hand. This was a favourite subject for sculpture

all over India in medieval times.

Plate XLVII
A sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is one foot five inches.
A lady warrior bending a bow. In ancient times the king's bodyguard was formed of lady warriors. During Vijayanagar period the emperor's zenana was guarded by lady warriors. In this sculpture the artist achieved the grace of a dance stance more than the force and strength of a warrior. It is an admirably executed piece.

Plate XLVIII
A sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is ten and a half inches.
He is a warrior in a dancing pose. The stone is much destroyed by erosion and so the form has lost its sharpness. Yet the vigour and force of a warrior in action is admirably present in this sculpture.

Plate IL
A sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Its height is one foot five inches.
A warrior stringing a bow. Bowmen of India were famous even abroad from ancient times. Though musket and cannon came into use as early as the 16th century A.D. bow continued to be one of the chief weapons used by the armies of India even upto the time of the Indian mutiny. This sculpture shows the strong bows the bowmen of India used in those days. The effort of the warrior is perfectly expressed.

Plate L
Sculpture of a prancing bull on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Indians have always loved cows and bulls. In this piece of lovely sculpture the Indian love of the bull is fully expressed. It is evident that the artist gamboled with this bull as the bull plays on the pillar of the mantapa.

Plate LI
A sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. Diameter of the circle is one foot two inches.
Lotus was the favourite floral subject of the Indian artist since time immemorial. The sculptor here, carved a lotus and dressed it with geometrical figures of triangles and a circle. It proclaims the unmistakable skill of the artist.

Plate LII
A sculpture on a pillar of the Kalyana mantapa. The total height of the figure is four feet.
It is the figure of an unidentifiable god attending the marriage of Siva. The virtuosity of the sculptor is unmistakable.

Plate LIII
A sculpture on a pillar flanking the eastern entrance to the Ranga mantapa.
Height of the sculpture is three feet.
This is a warrior with a sword and shield supporting a hero riding a lion. Such fantasies were common in the medieval sculptures of India.

Plate LIV
Sculpture of Nataraja on one of the pillars of the Ranga mantapa.
It is about lifesize, being of a height of four feet six inches. Nataraja was a favourite subject of the artists of medieval times in south India. The dance of Siva represents both creation and destruction. Here Siva is in the Ananda tandava pose, i.e. in the act of creation. The figure of an apasmara purusha under Siva's foot is also seen. It is admirably executed, done in full freedom without missing any of the iconographic details. Even his munda mala or the garland of skulls is sculptured in detail. A slight sway of the munda mala suggests the delicate, soft and rhythmic movements of Siva as he danced.

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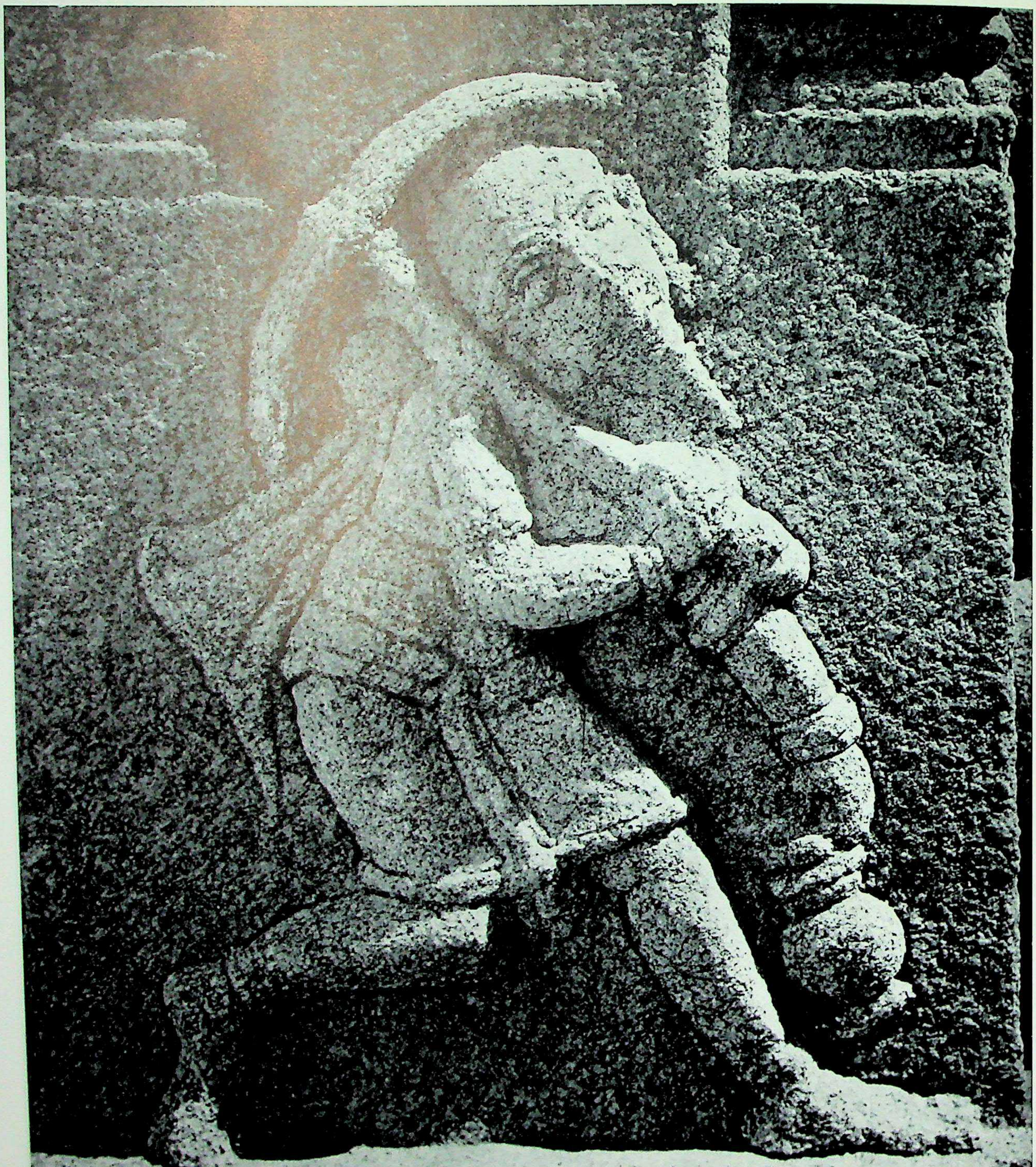
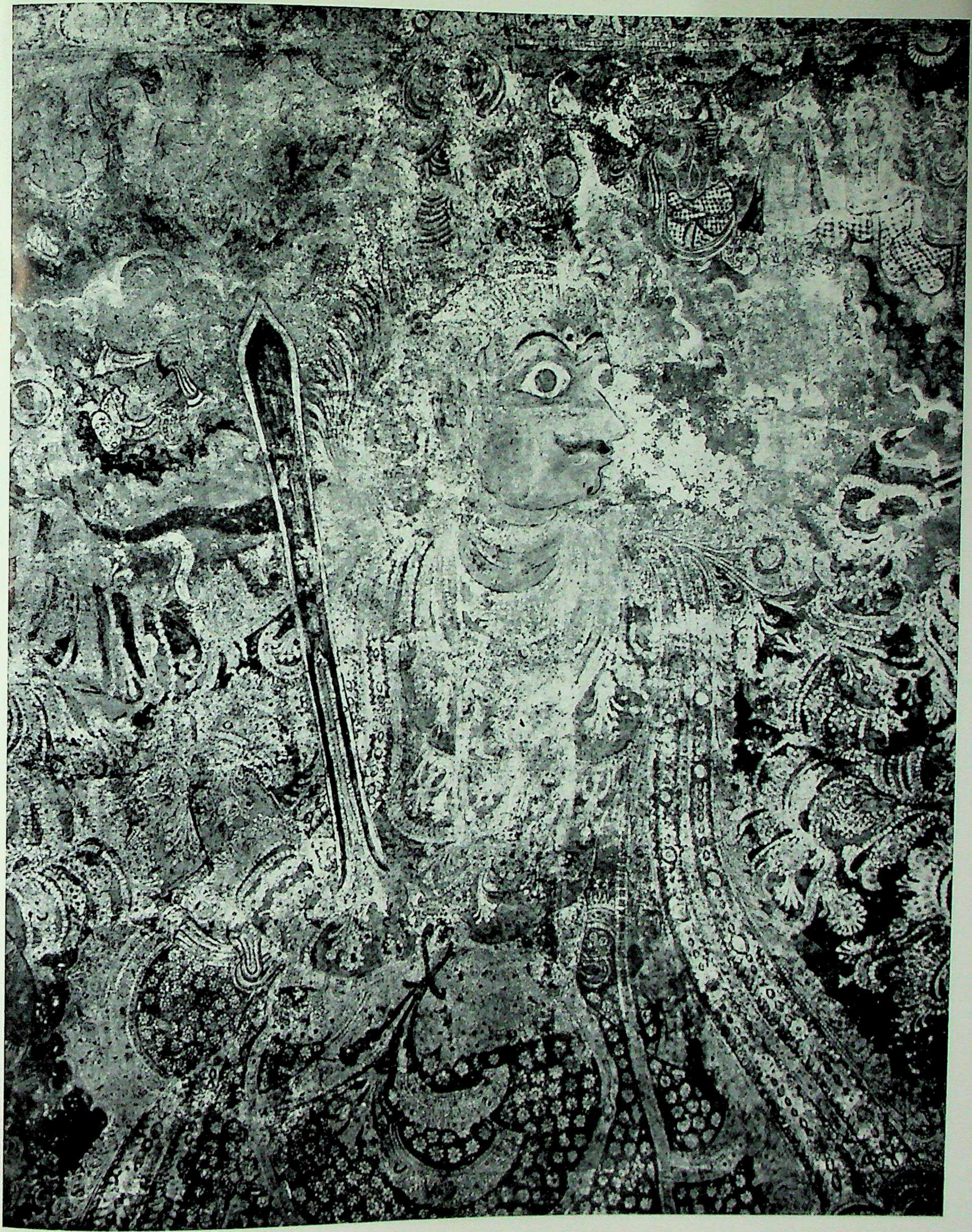
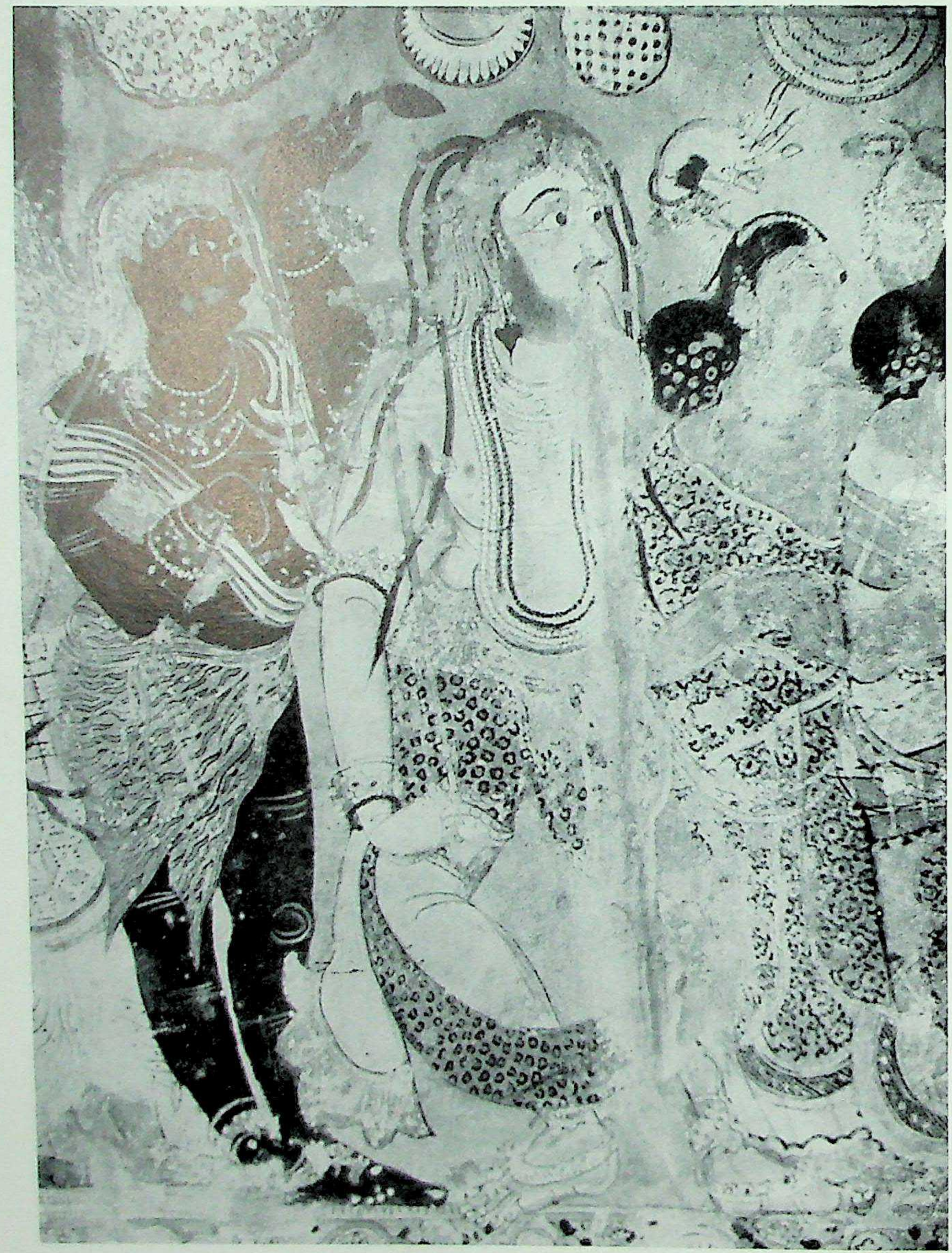
PLATES



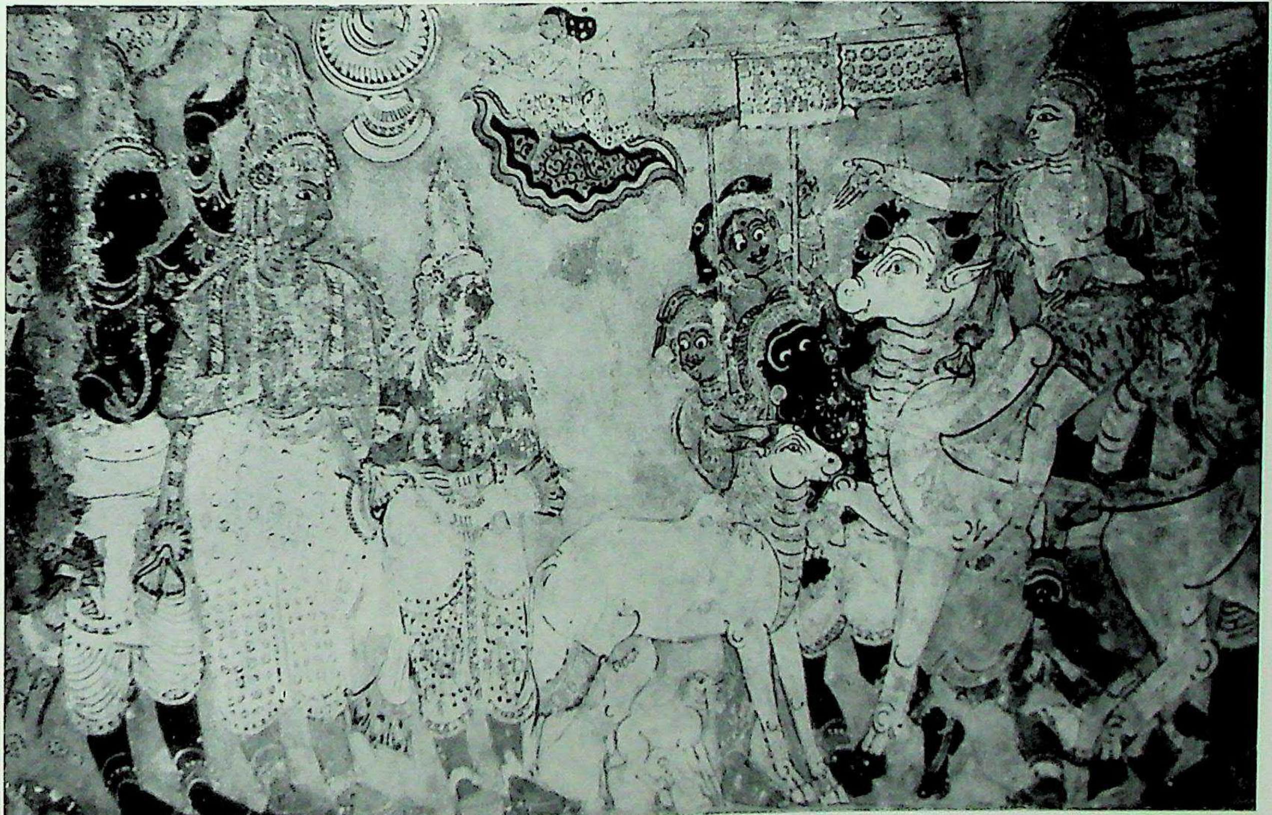
Pl. IX. A RISHI ON A JOURNEY: ON A PILLAR IN THE KALYANA MANTAPA



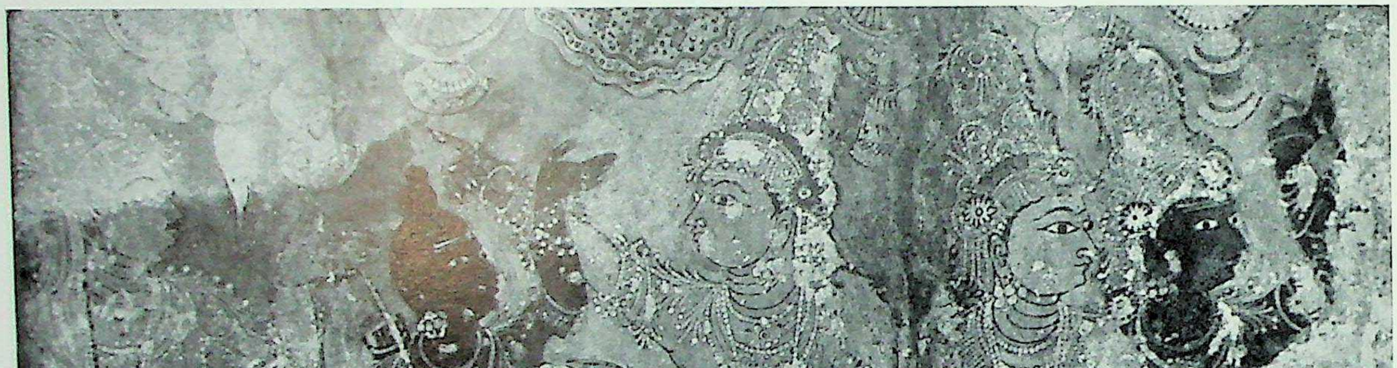
Pl. X. VEERABHADRA : PAINTING ON THE CEILING OF THE GARBHA GRIHA



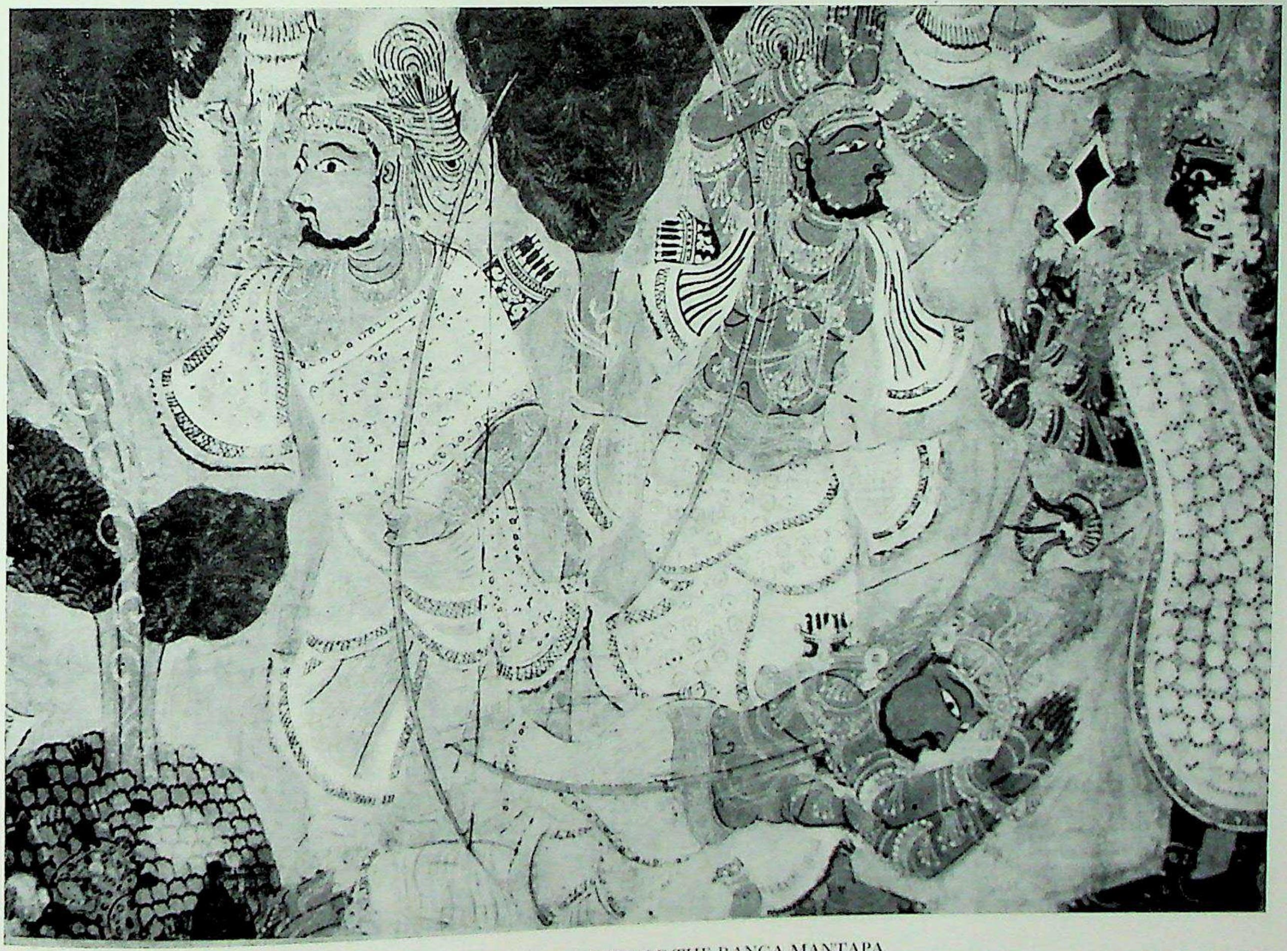
Pl. XI. SIVA IN BHUKAILAS STORY : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



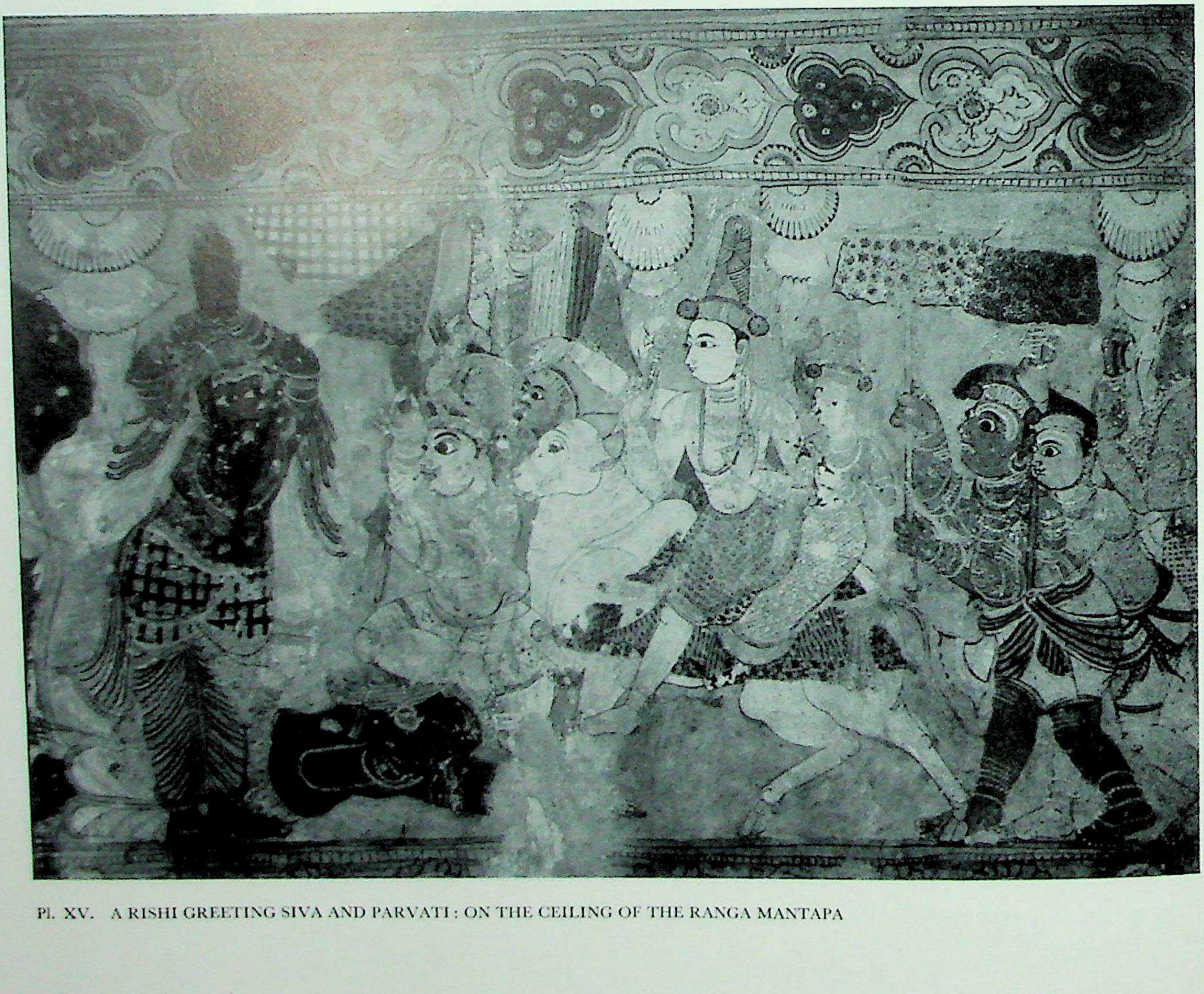
PL. XII. SIVA ON NANDI RESTORING THE LIFE OF THE CALF : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



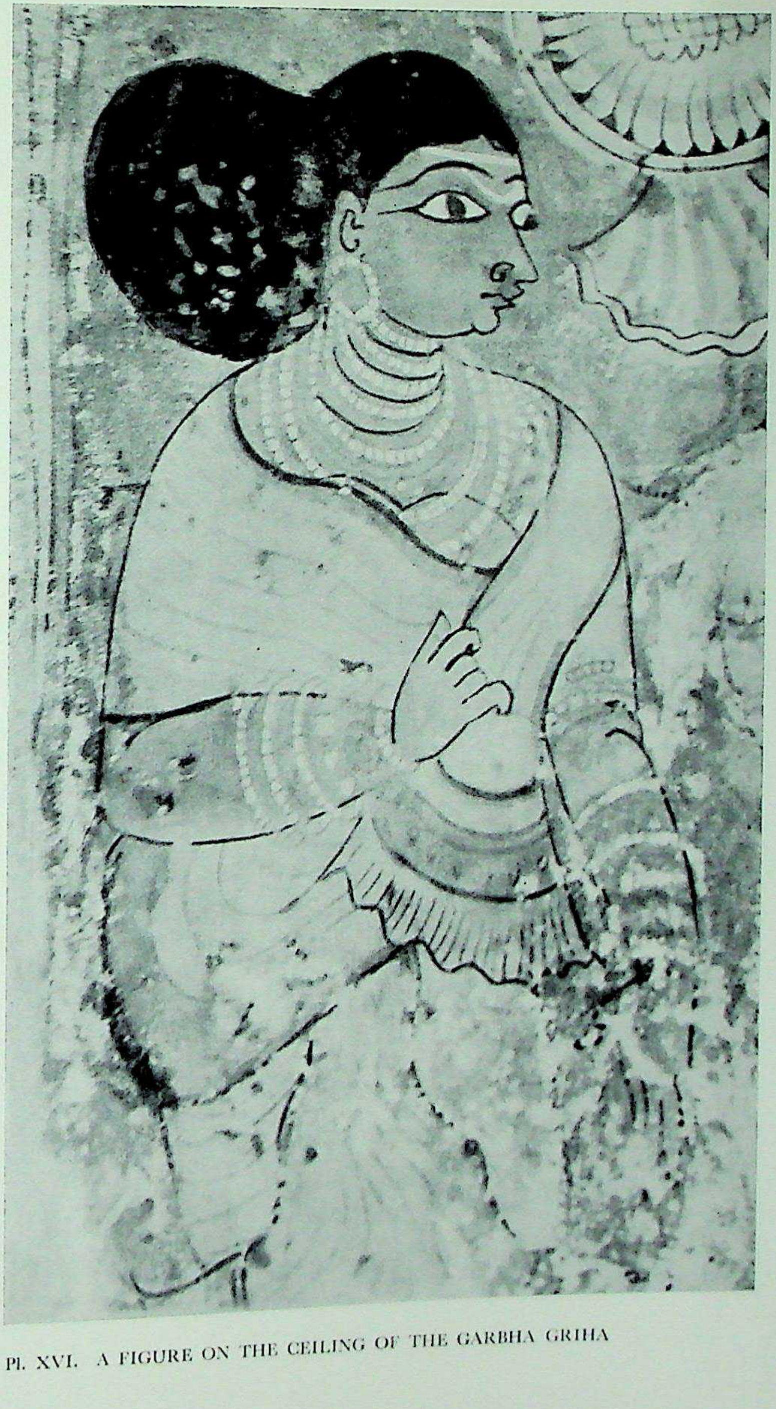
Pl. XIII. THE COW ACCOSTING THE PRINCE ON THE CHARIOT: ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



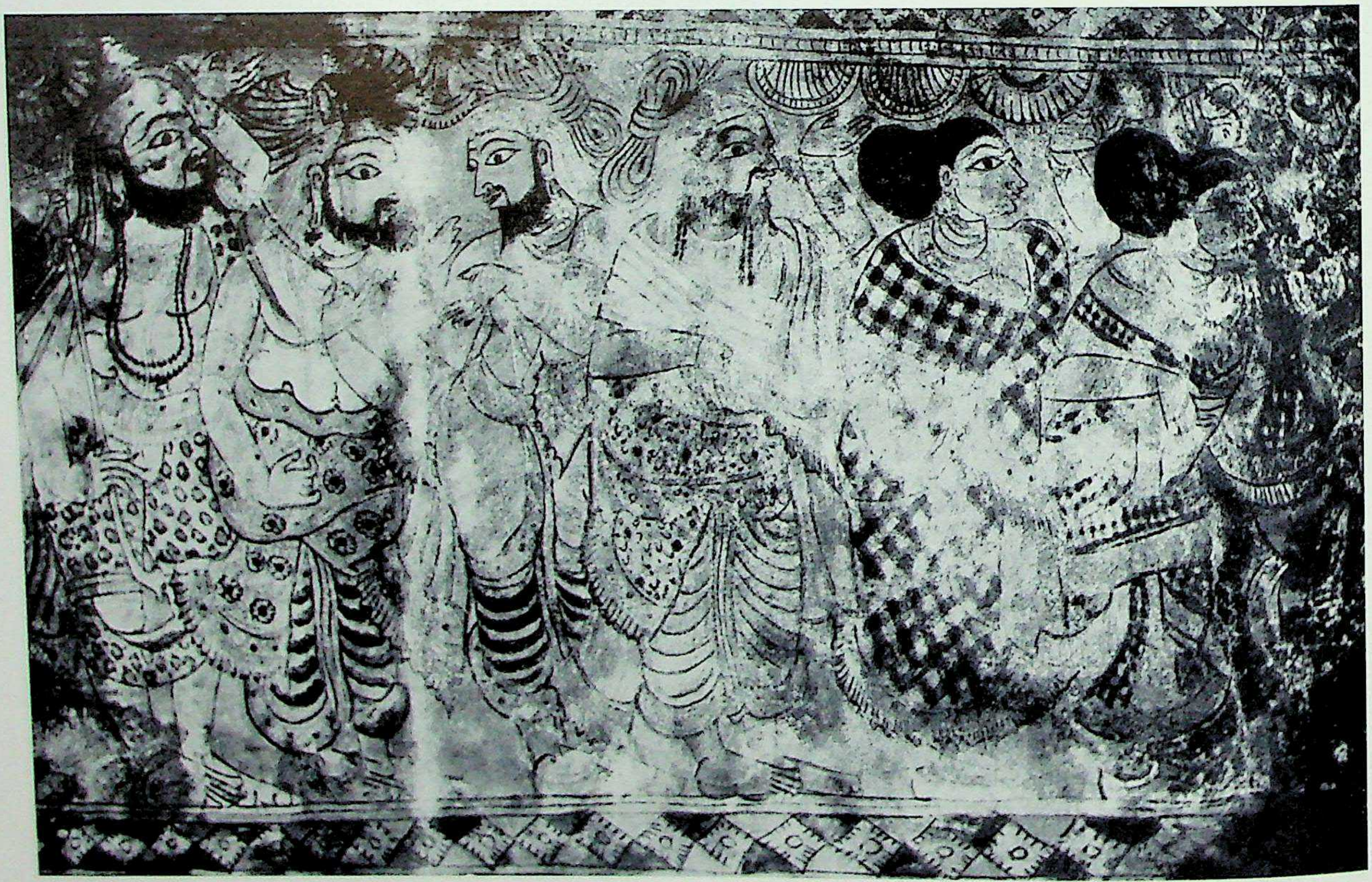
Pl. XIV. SIVA GRANTING DARSAN TO ARJUNA : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



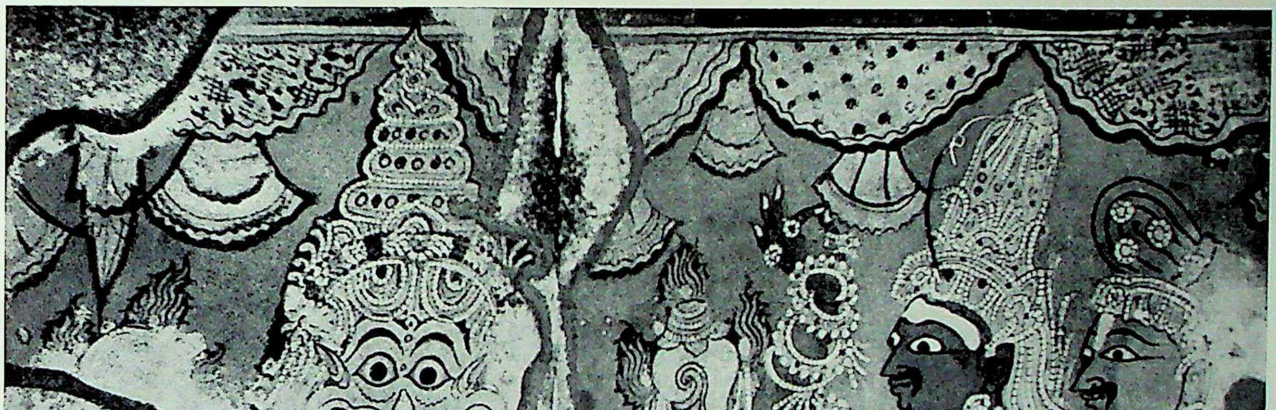
Pl. XV. A RISHI GREETING SIVA AND PARVATI : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



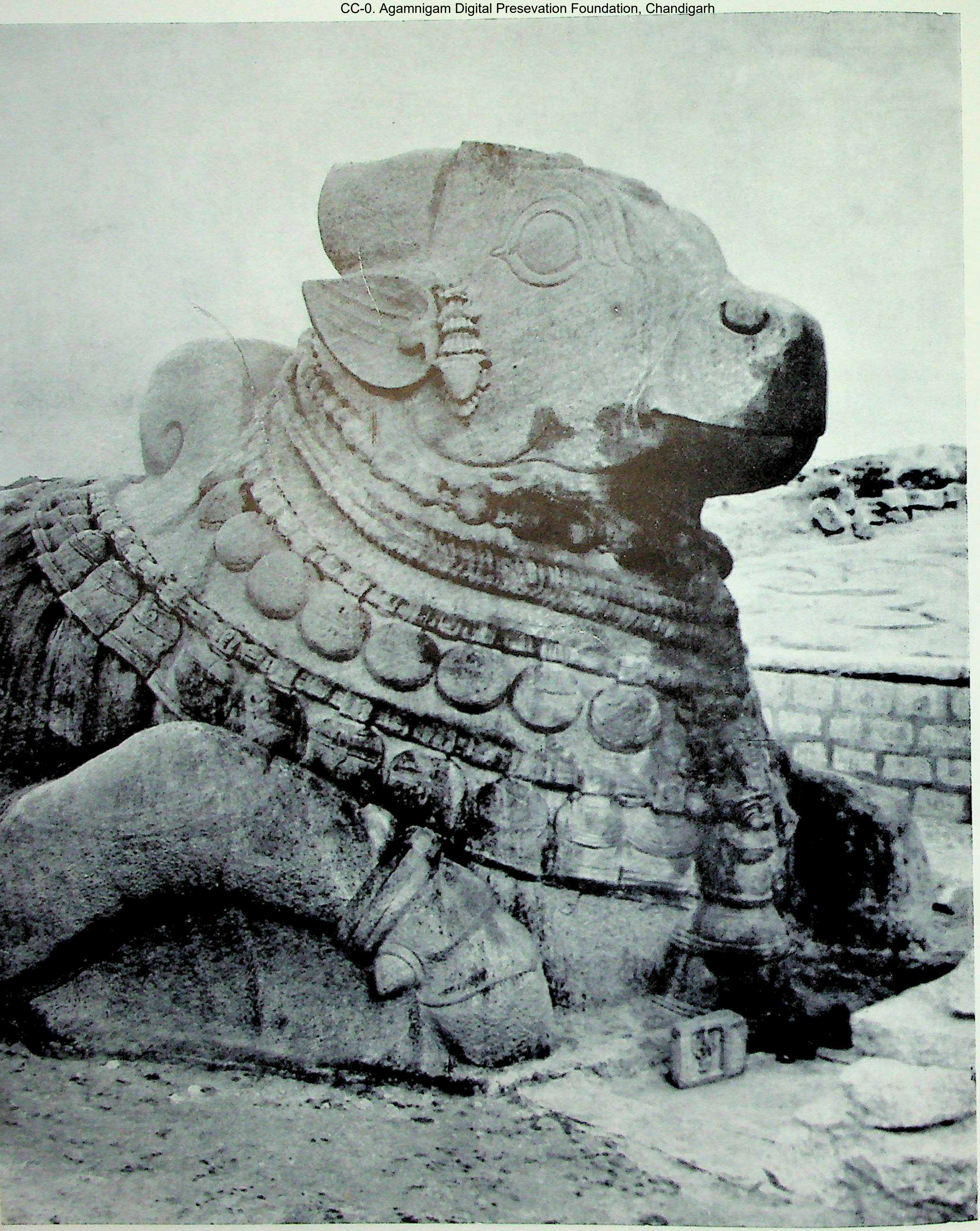
Pl. XVI. A FIGURE ON THE CEILING OF THE GARBHA GRIHA



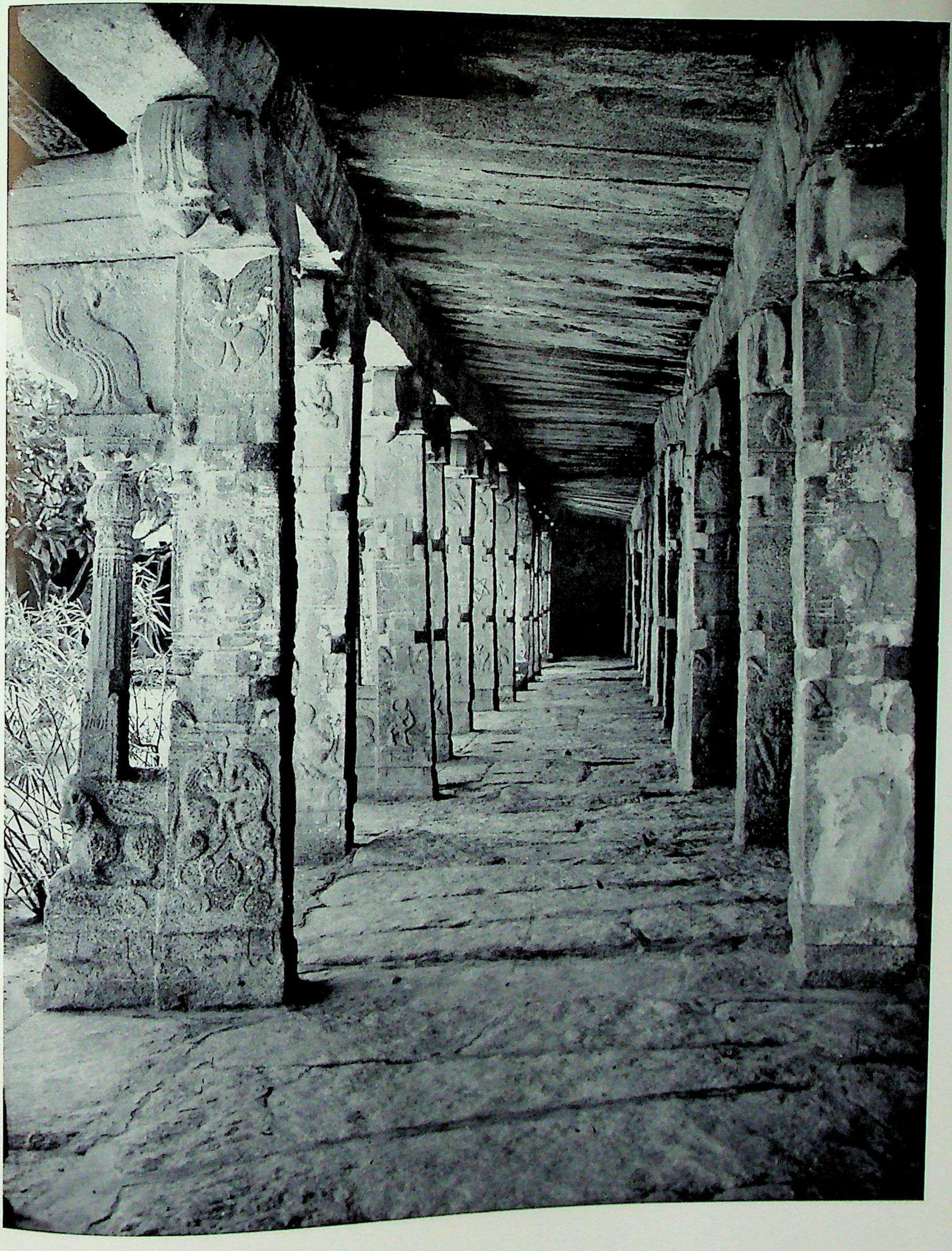
PL. XVII. A GROUP OF RISHIS AND LADIES : ON THE CEILING OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



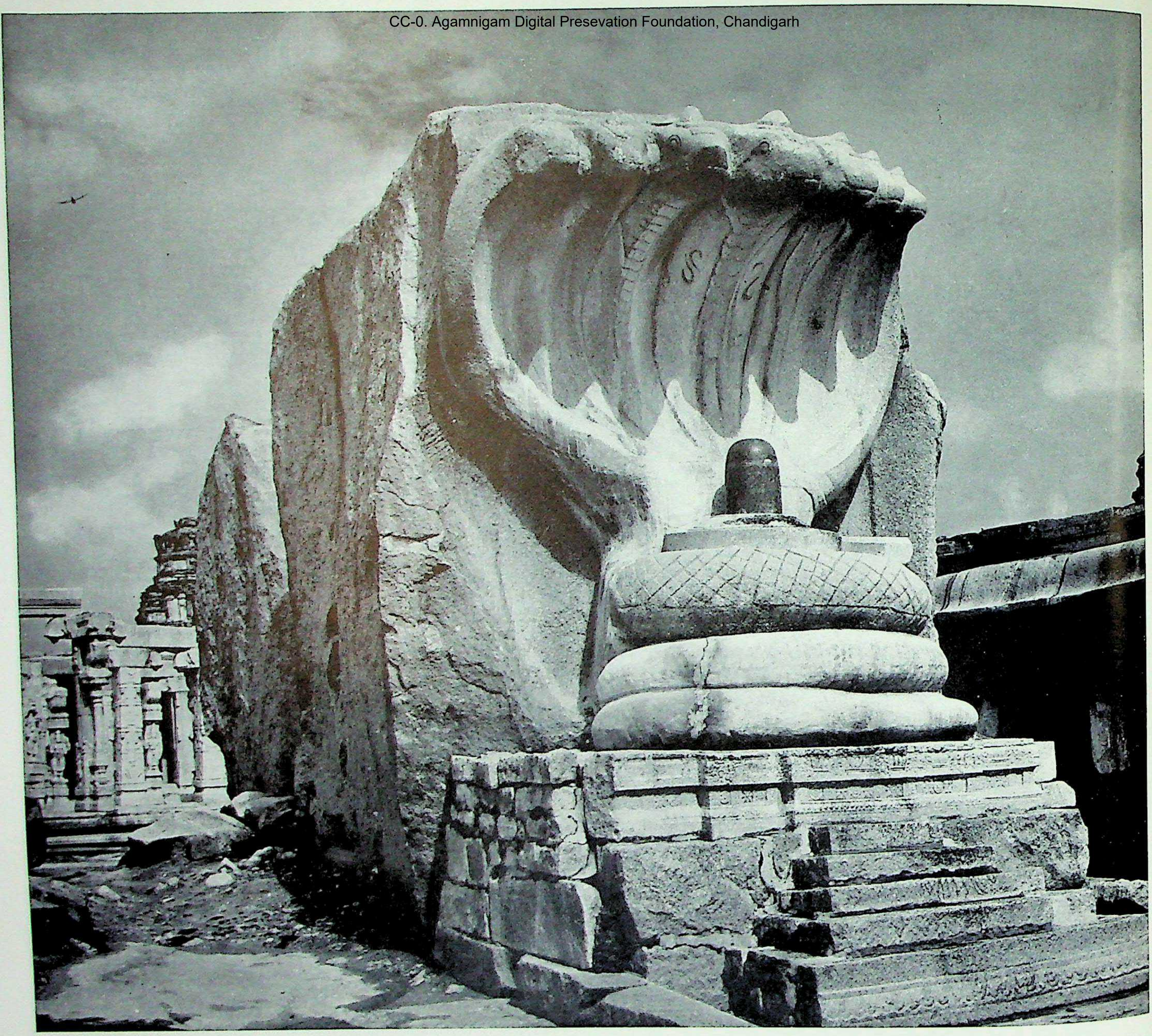
Pl. XVIII. YOGA NARASIMHA ATTENDED BY BHAKTAS: ON THE CEILING OF THE RAGHUNATHALAYA



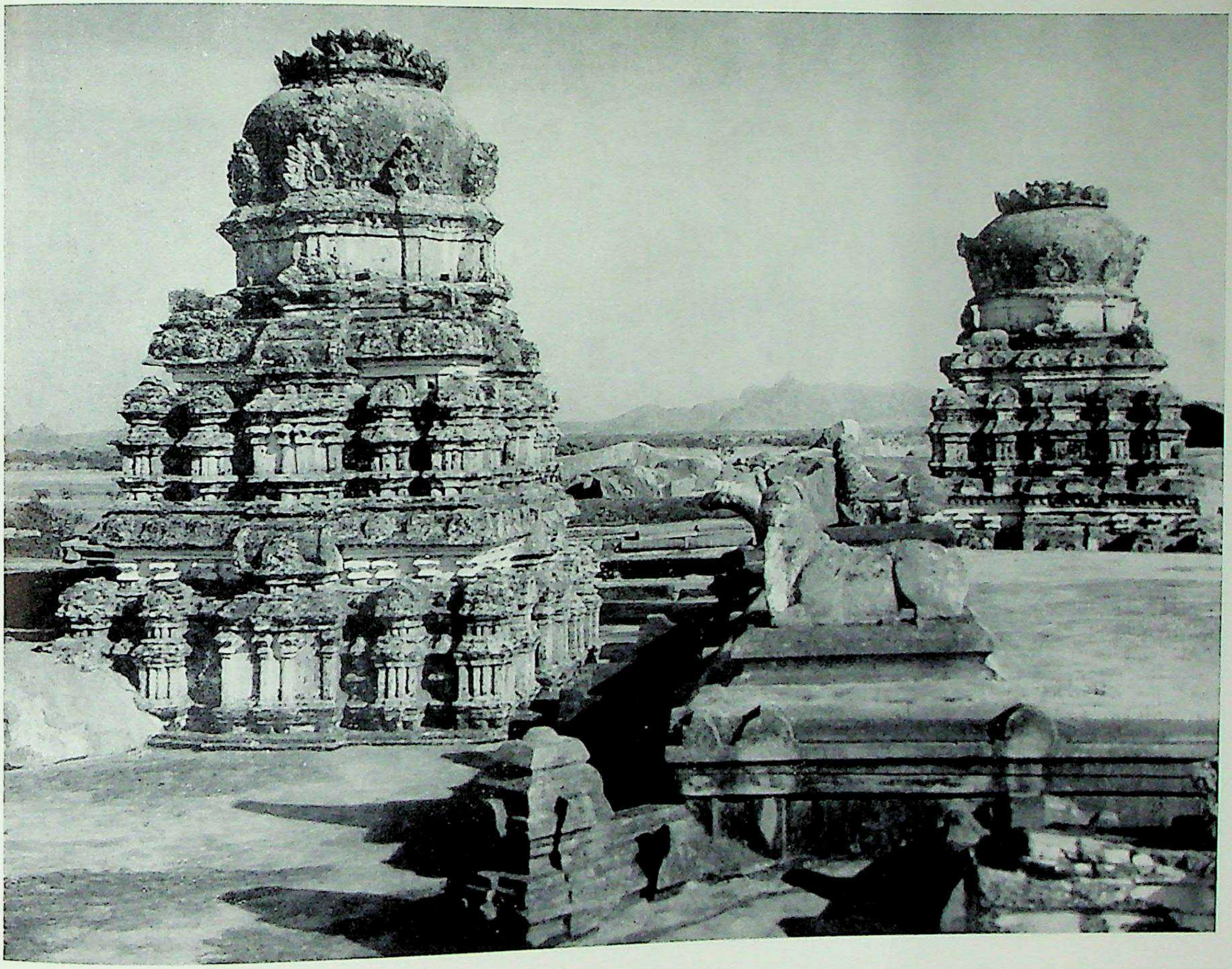
Pl. XIX. THE FAMOUS BULL OF LEPAKSHI



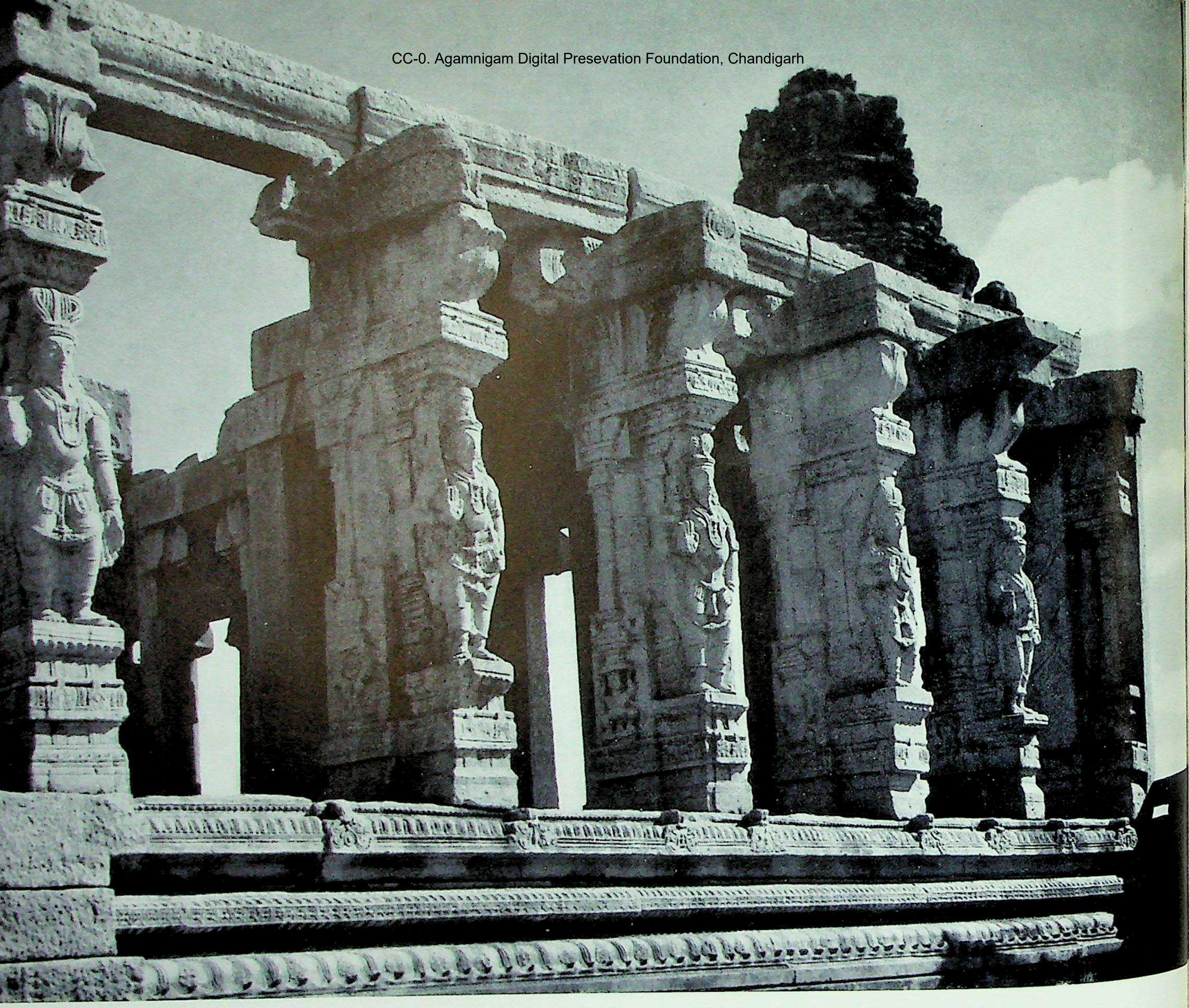
Pl. XX. A PILLARED CLOISTER OF THE TEMPLE



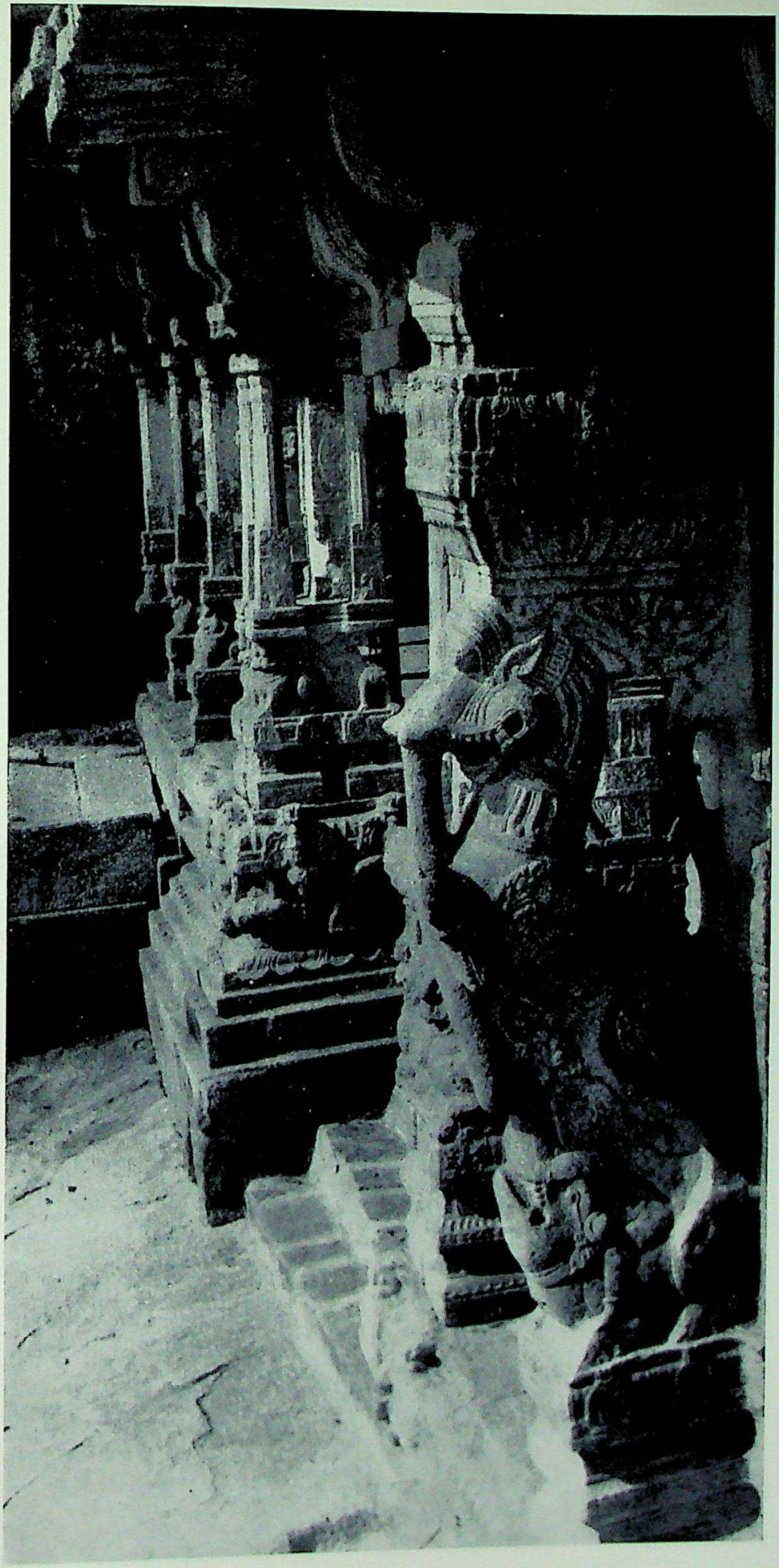
Pl. XXI. THE FAMOUS NAGALINGA OF THE LEPAKSHI TEMPLE



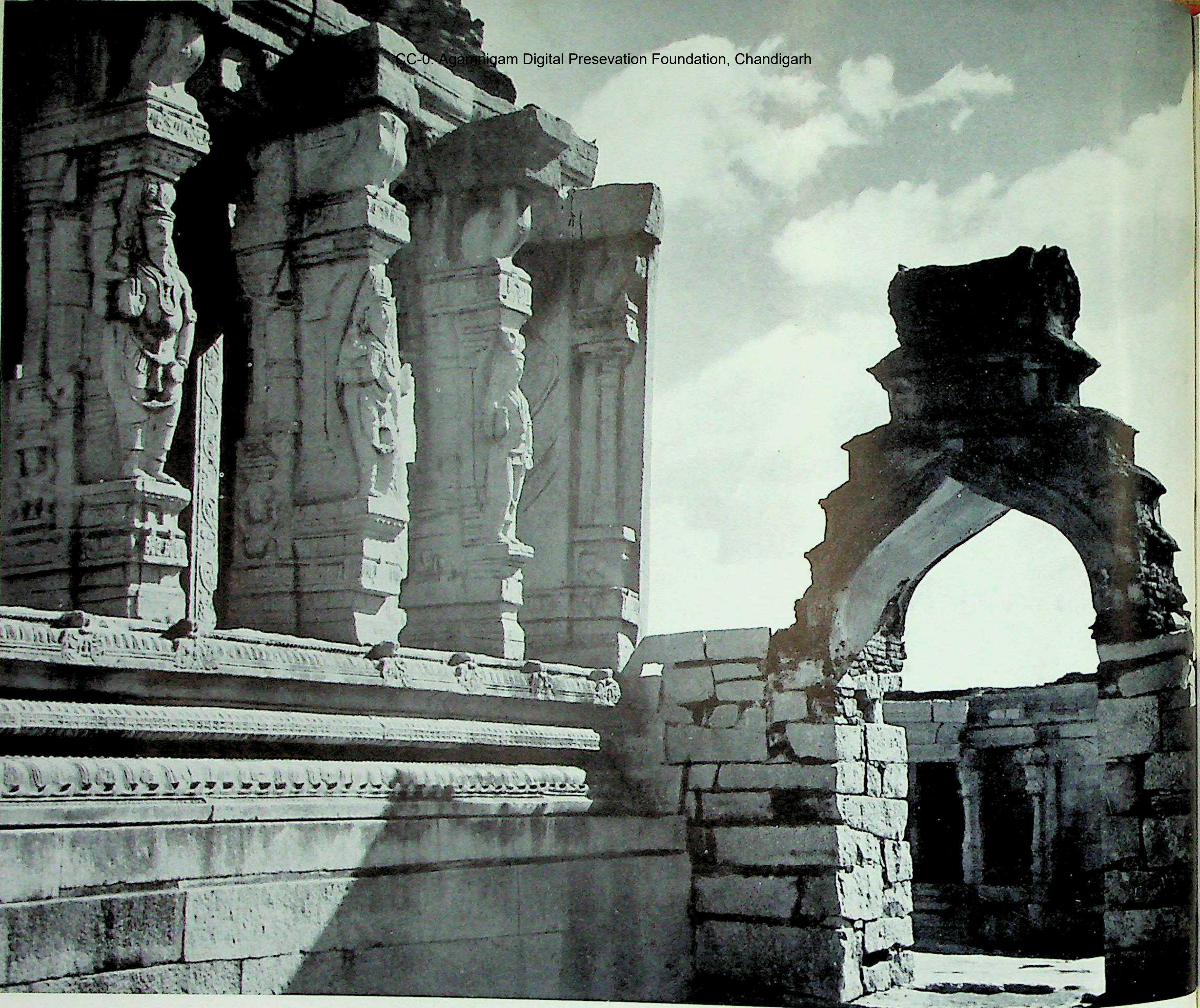
Pl. XXII. A VIEW OF THE TEMPLE



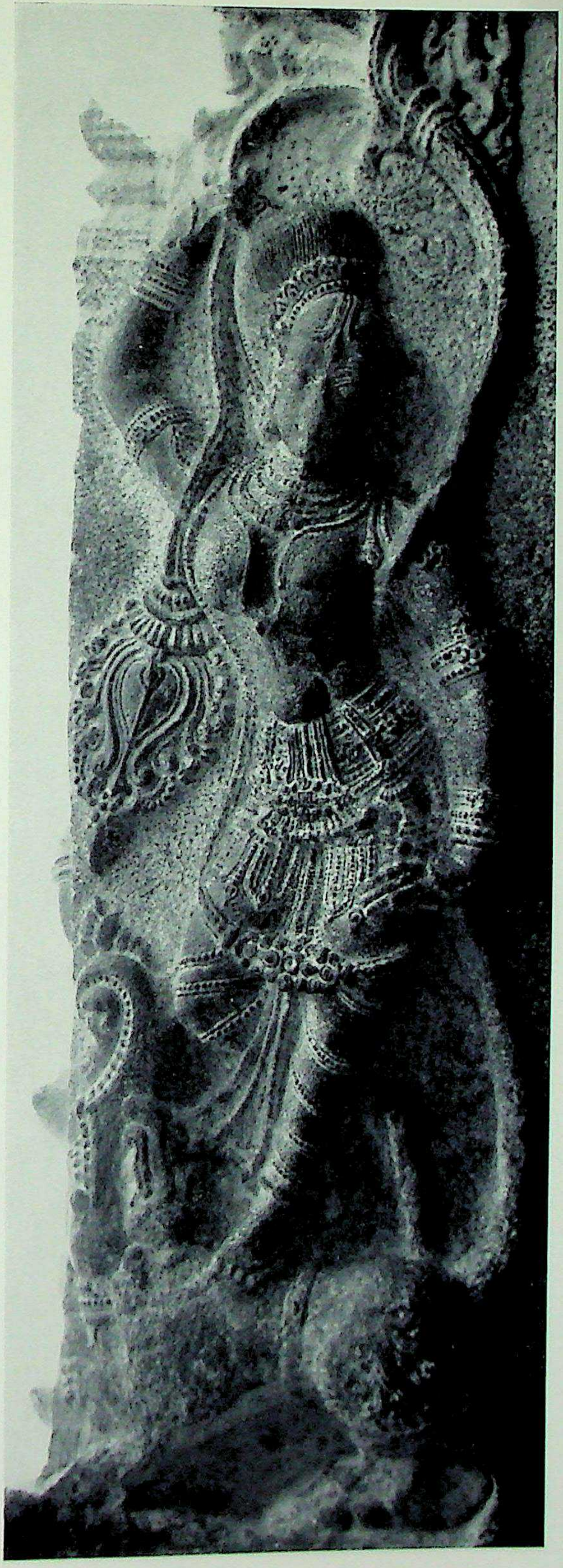
Pl. XXIII. PILLARS OF THE UNFINISHED KALYANA MANTAPA



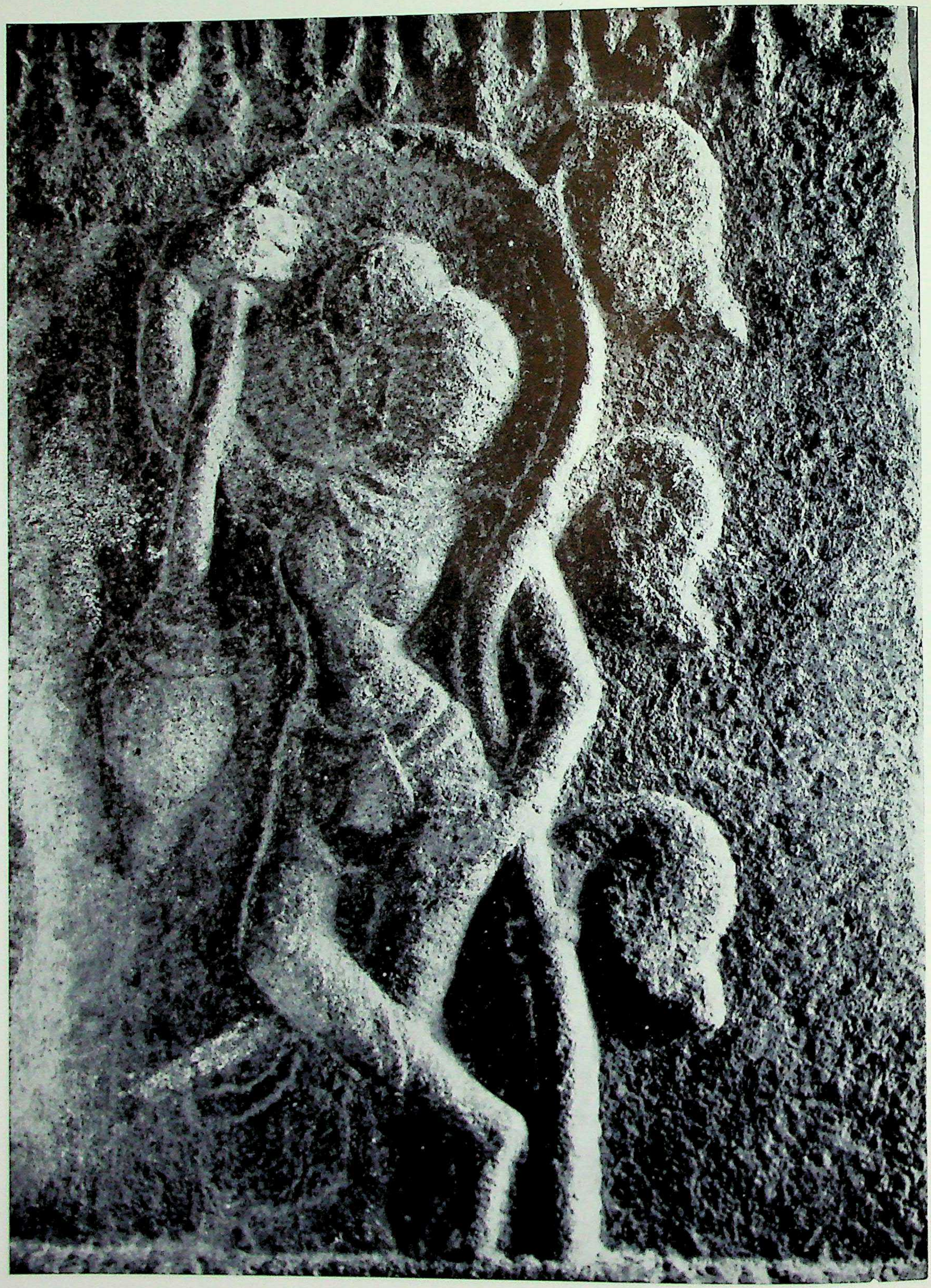
Pl. XXIV. PILLARS OF THE RANGA MANTAPA ON THE EASTERN FRONT



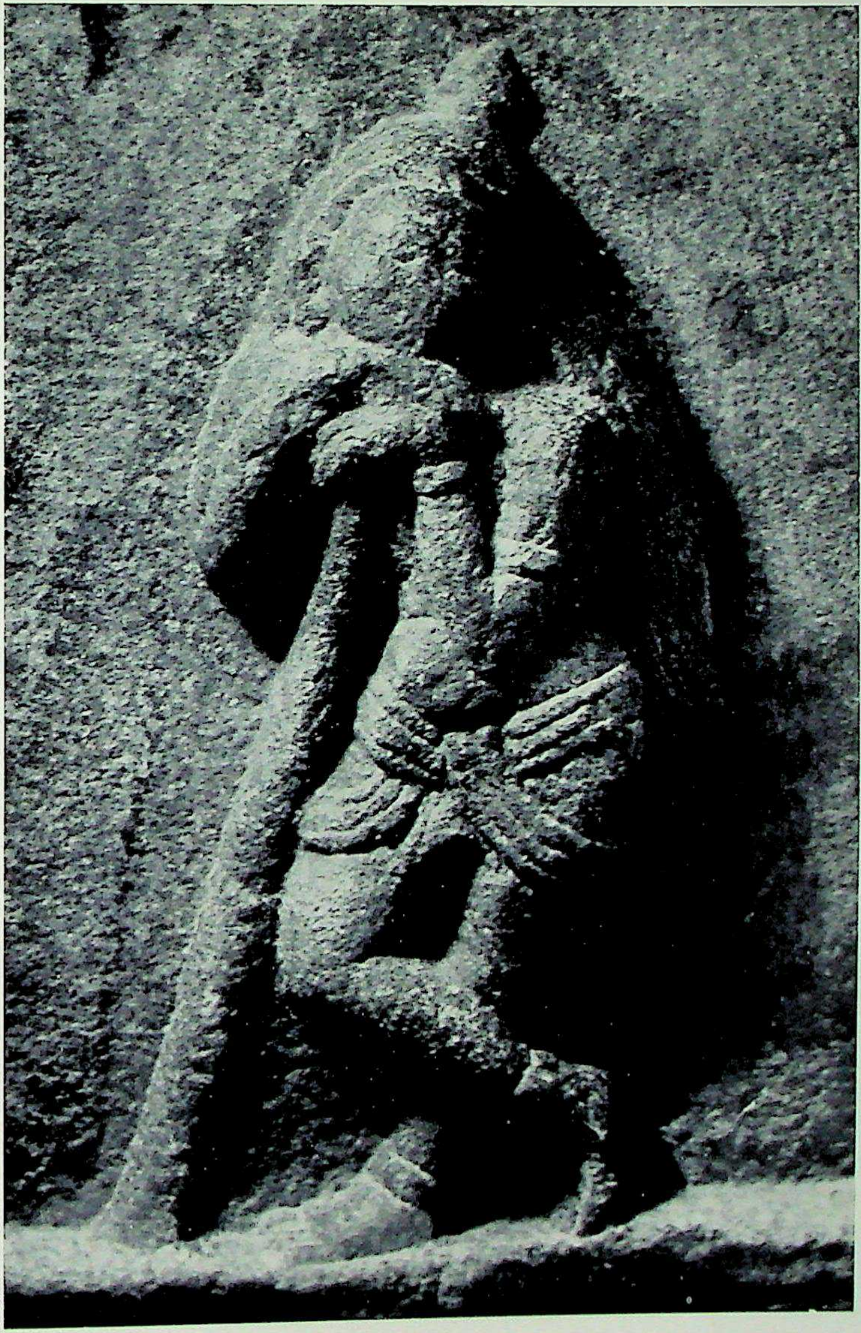
Pl. XXV. ANOTHER VIEW OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



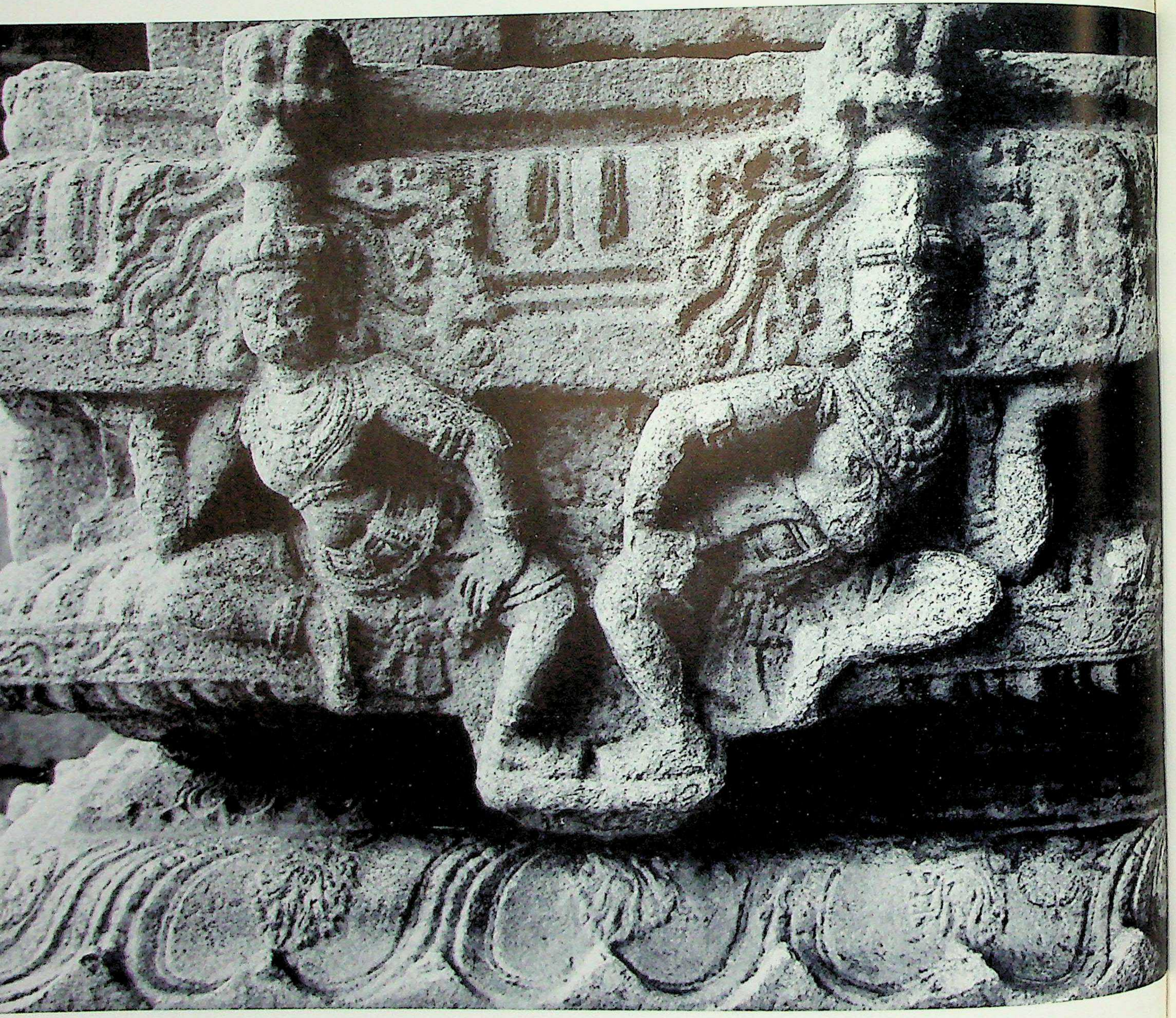
PL. XXVI. GANGA ON THE JAMB OF THE GATEWAY



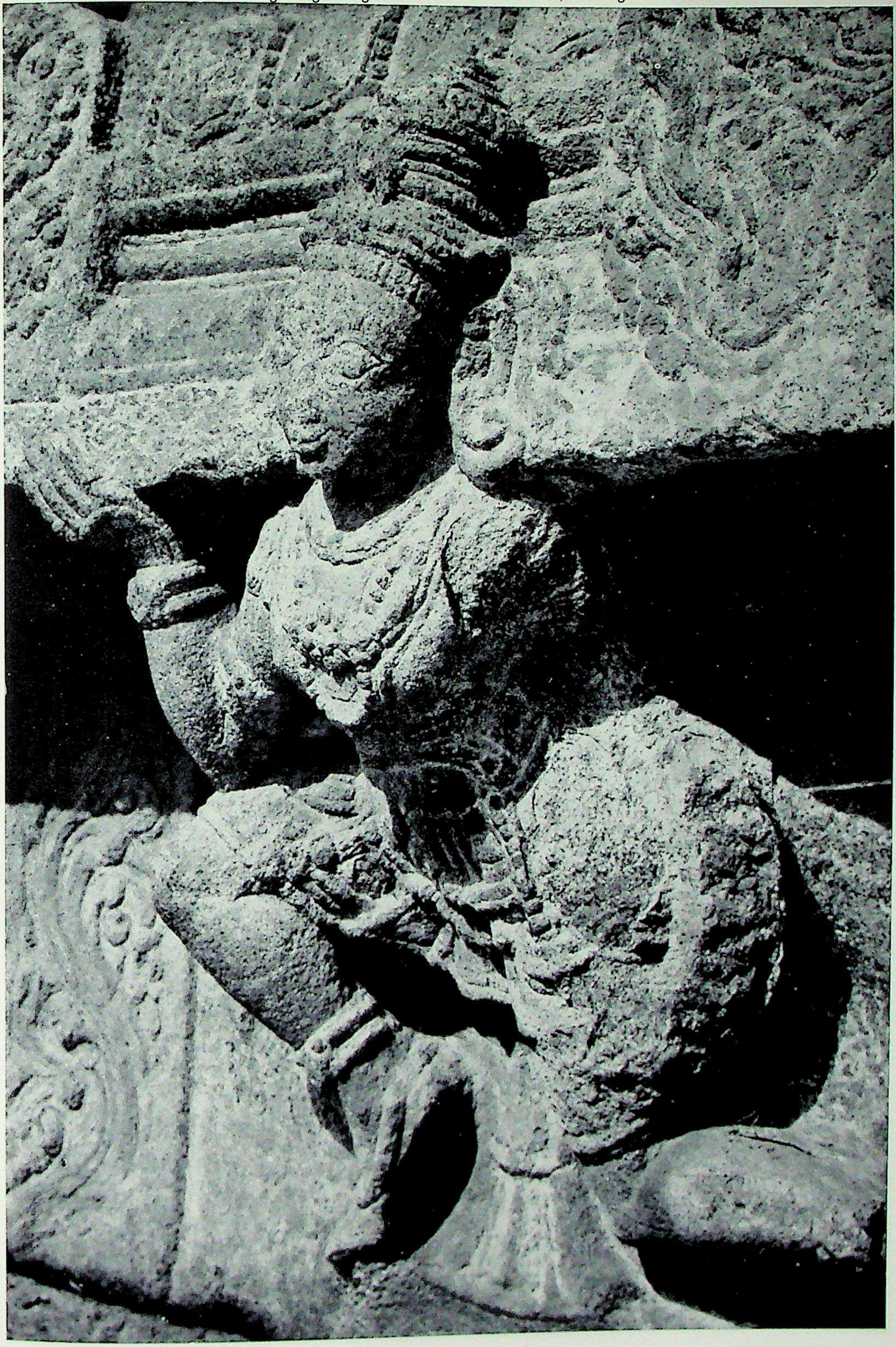
Pl. XXVII. THE FAMOUS LATASUNDARI OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



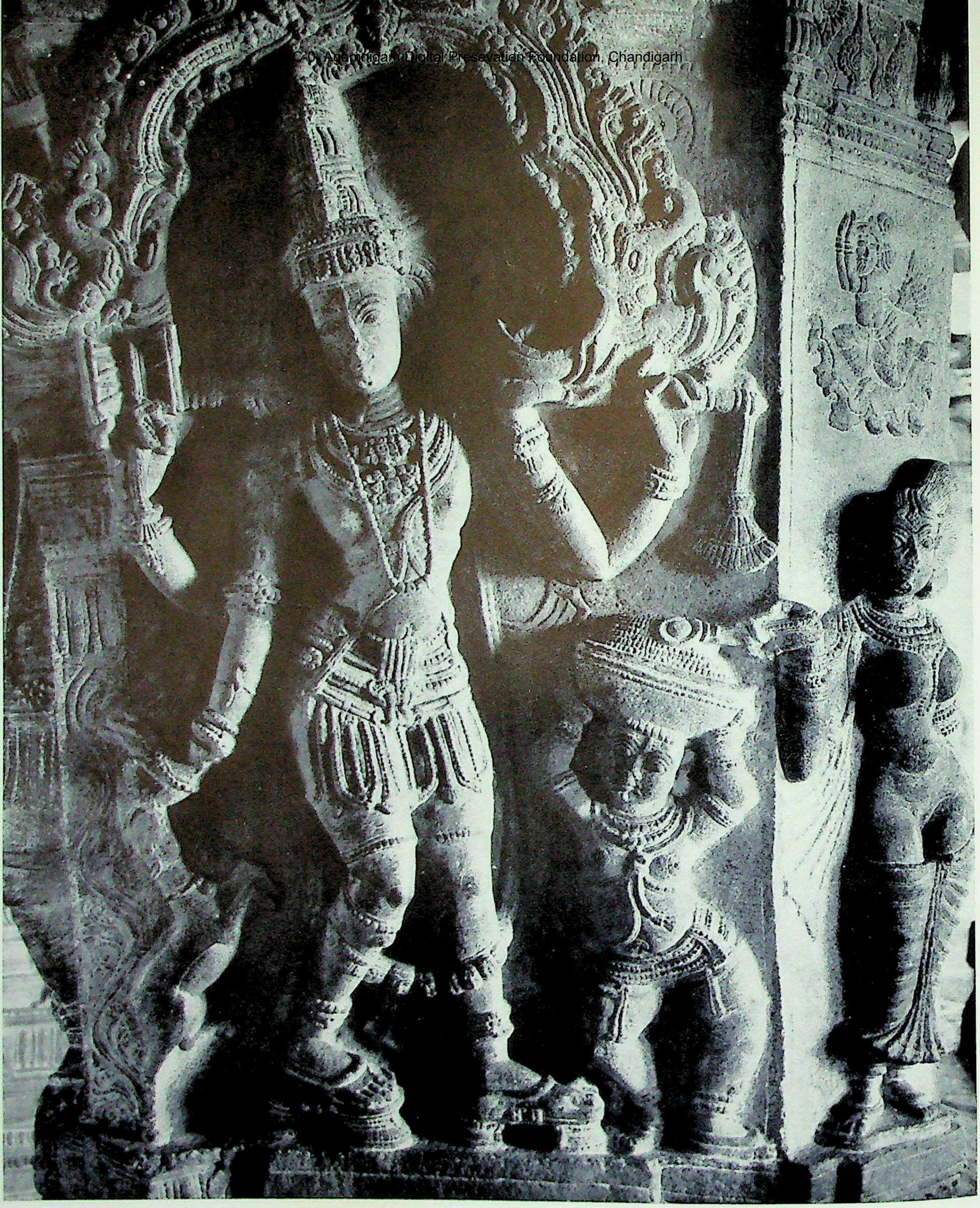
Pl. XXVIII. A SHEPHERD: ON A PILLAR IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



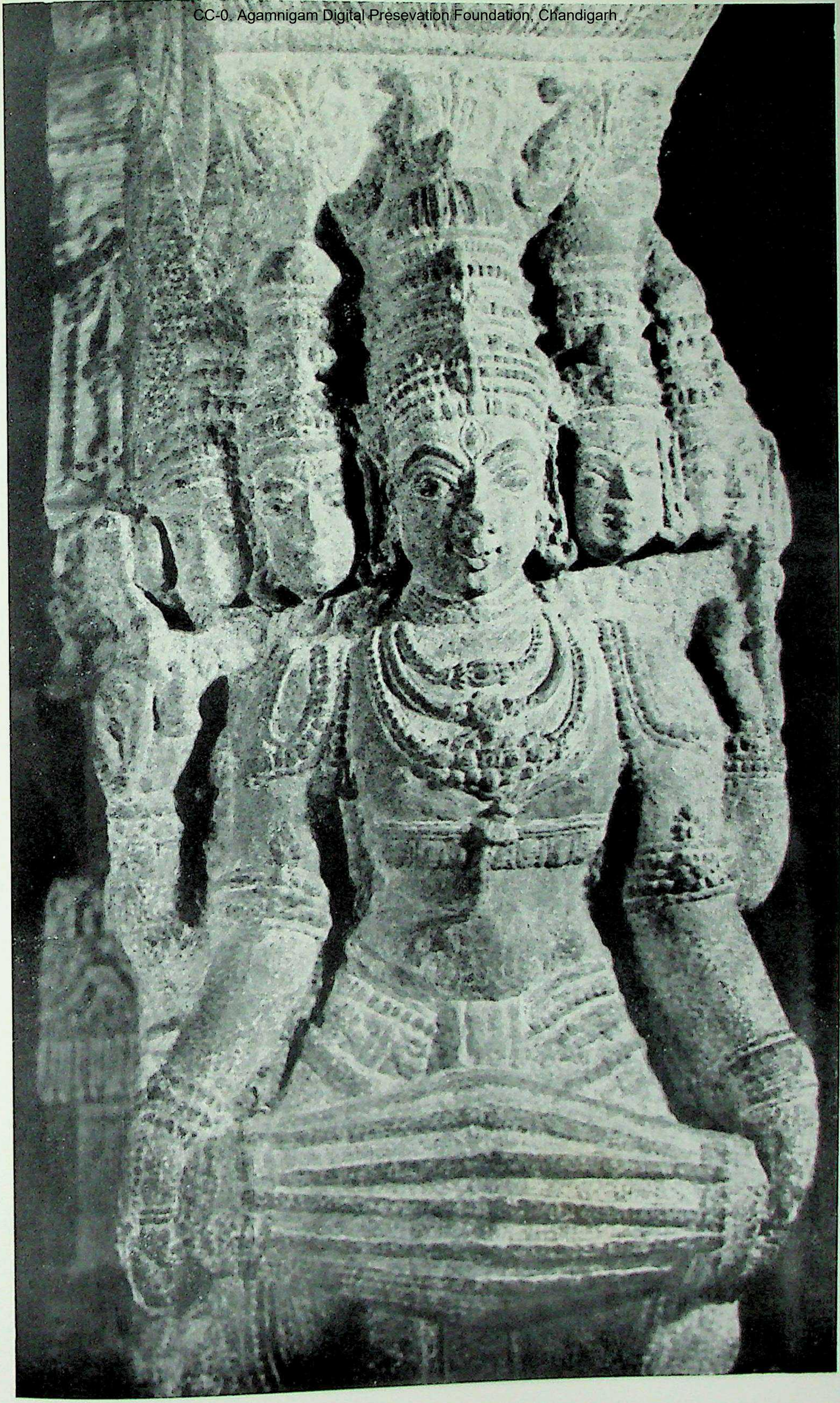
Pl. XXIX. FLYING GANDHARVAS: ON THE PLINTH OF THE TEMPLE



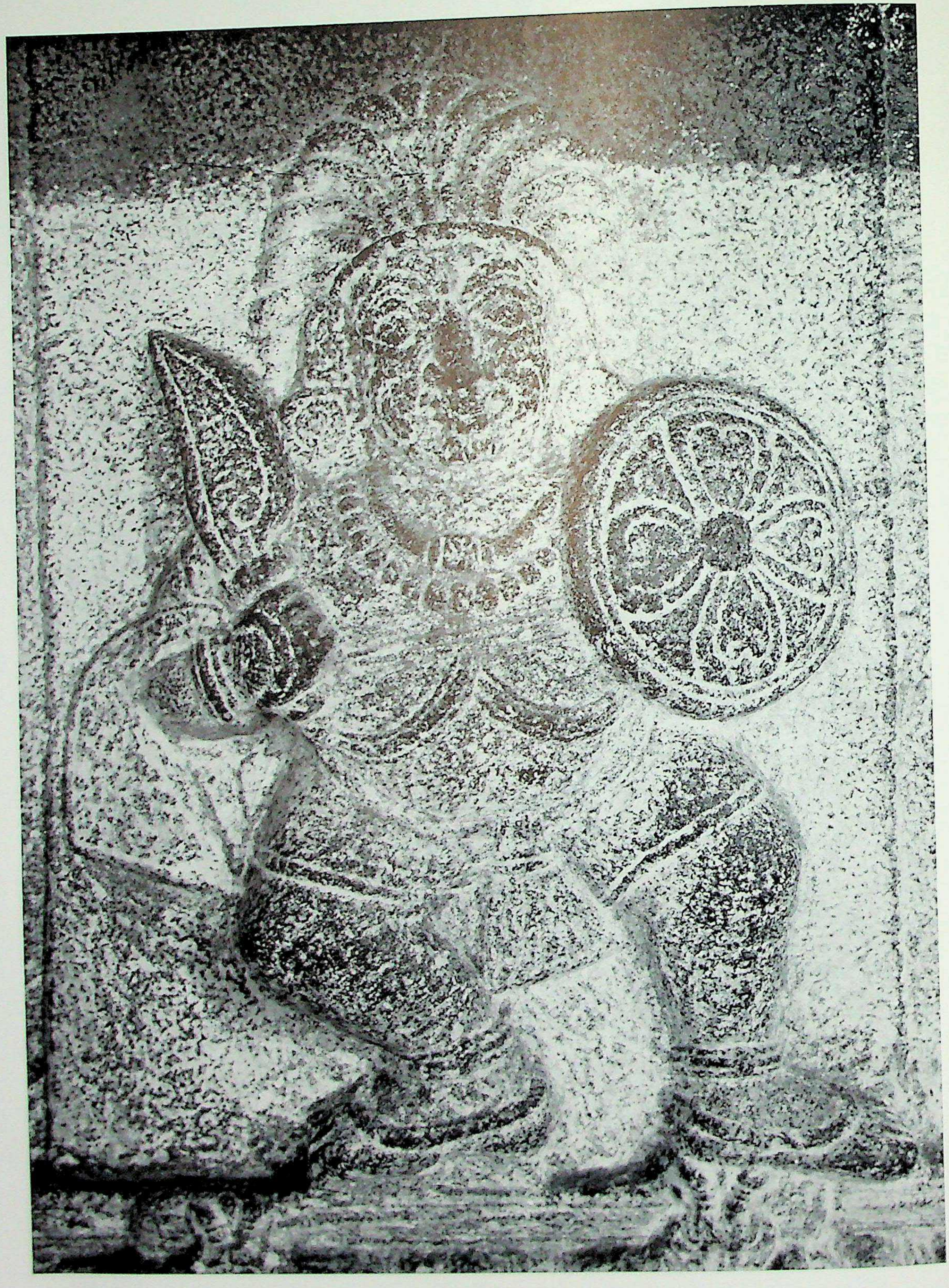
Pl. XXX. DETAIL OF A FLYING GANDHARVA: ON THE PLINTH OF THE TEMPLE



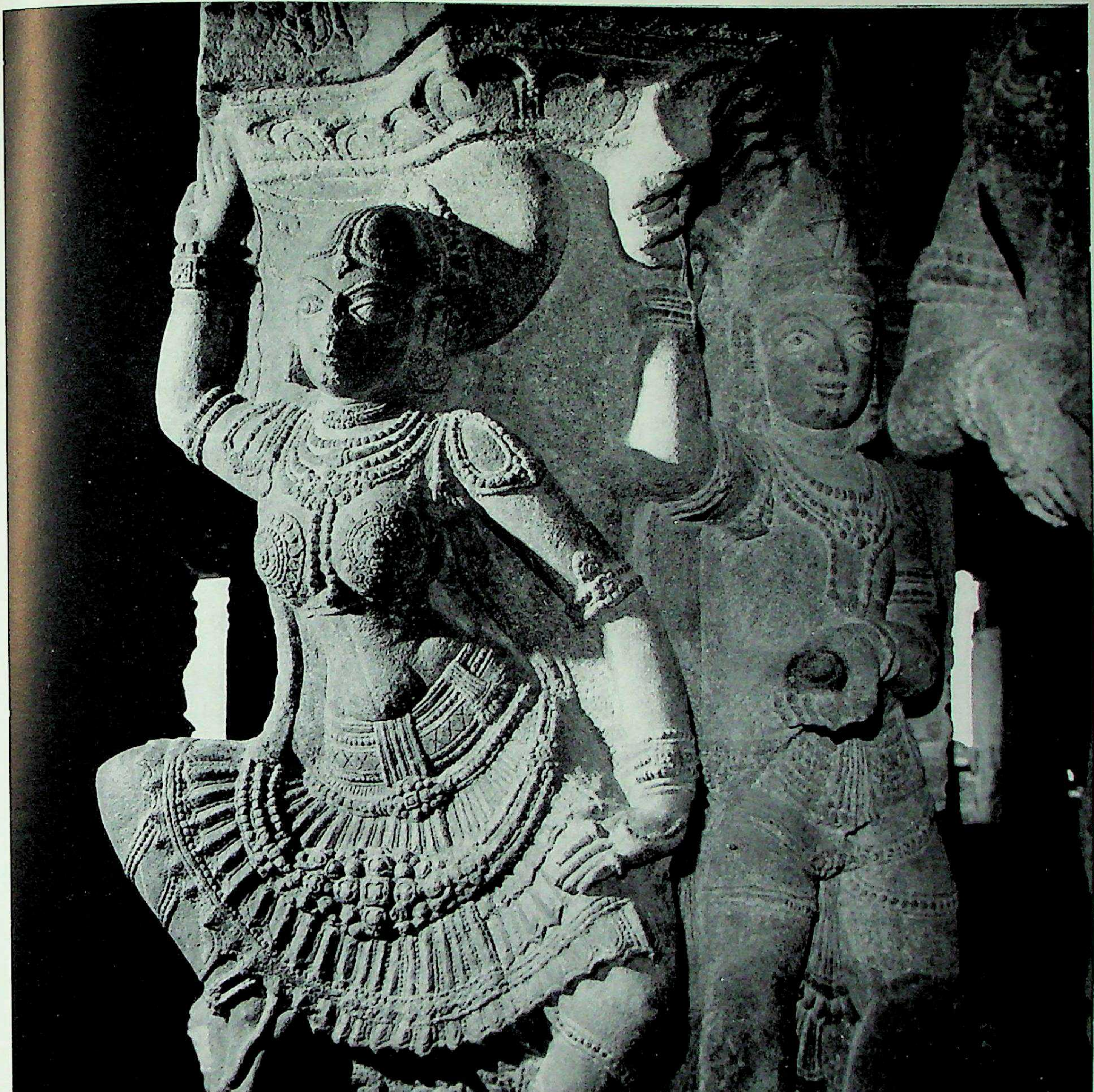
Pl. XXXI. THE FAMOUS BHIKSHATANA MURTI SCULPTURE: IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



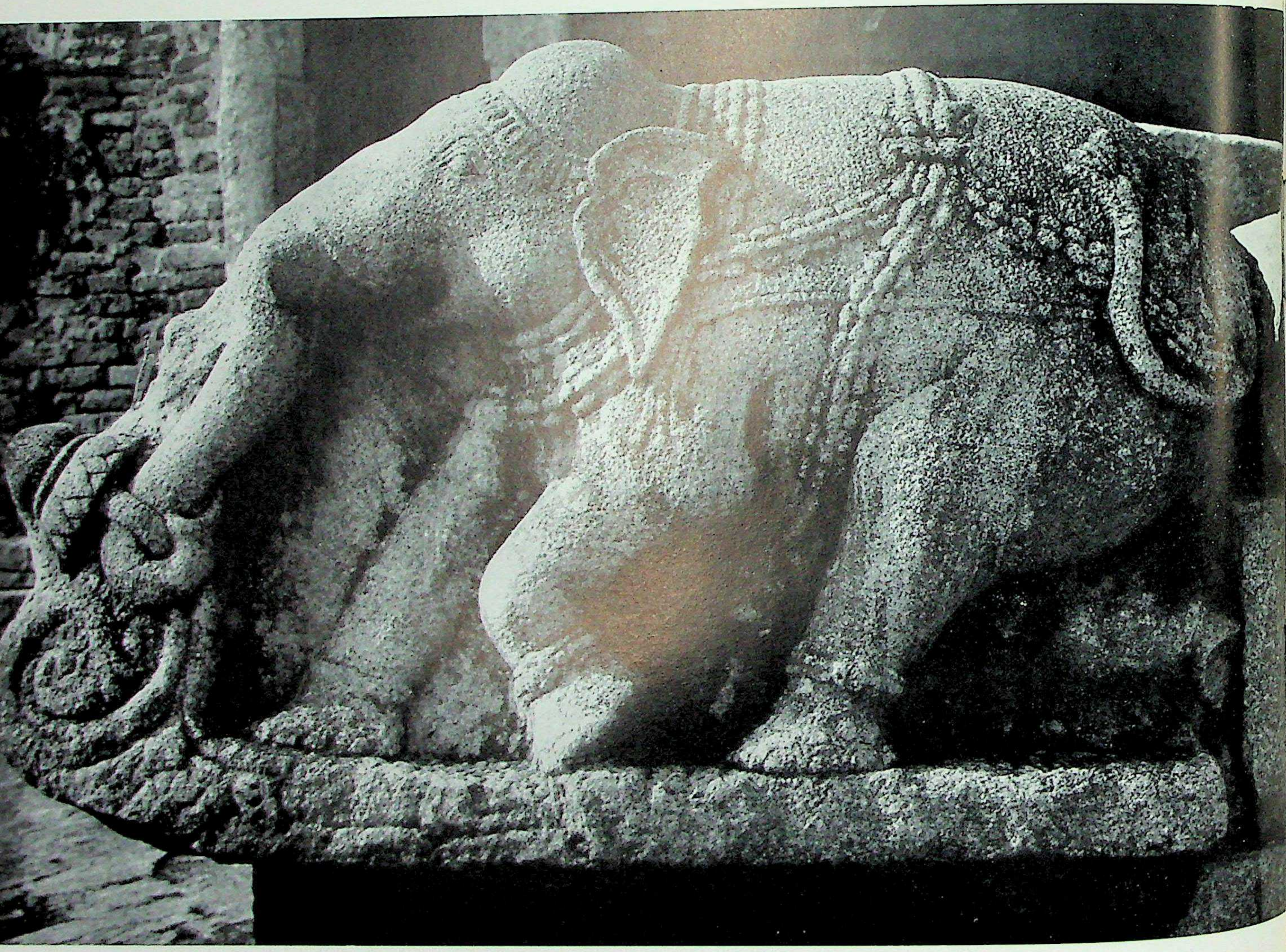
Pl. XXXII. AN UNIDENTIFIED FIVE-HEADED GOD: IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



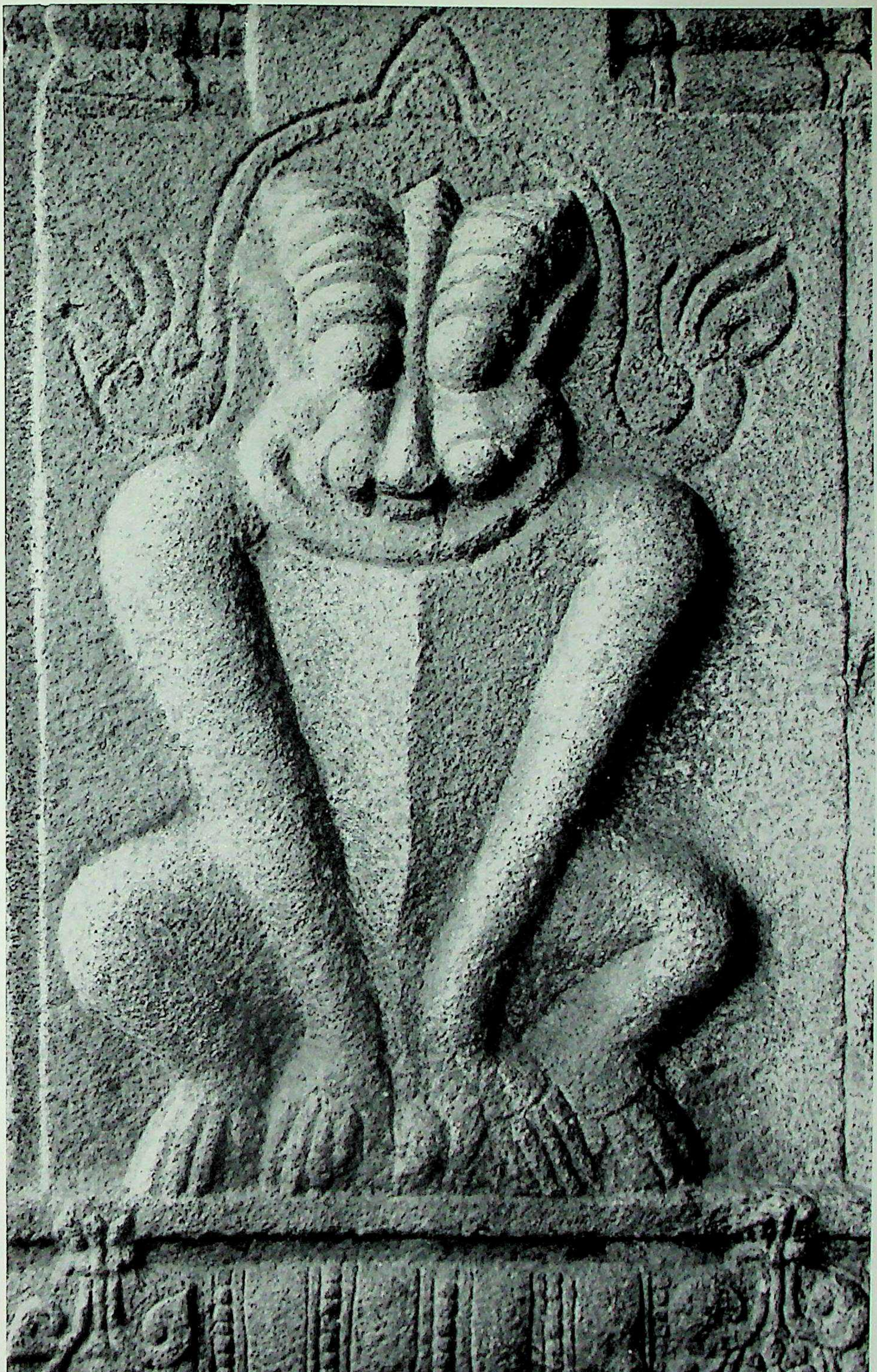
Pl. XXXIII. A GANA OF SIVA: ON A PILLAR IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



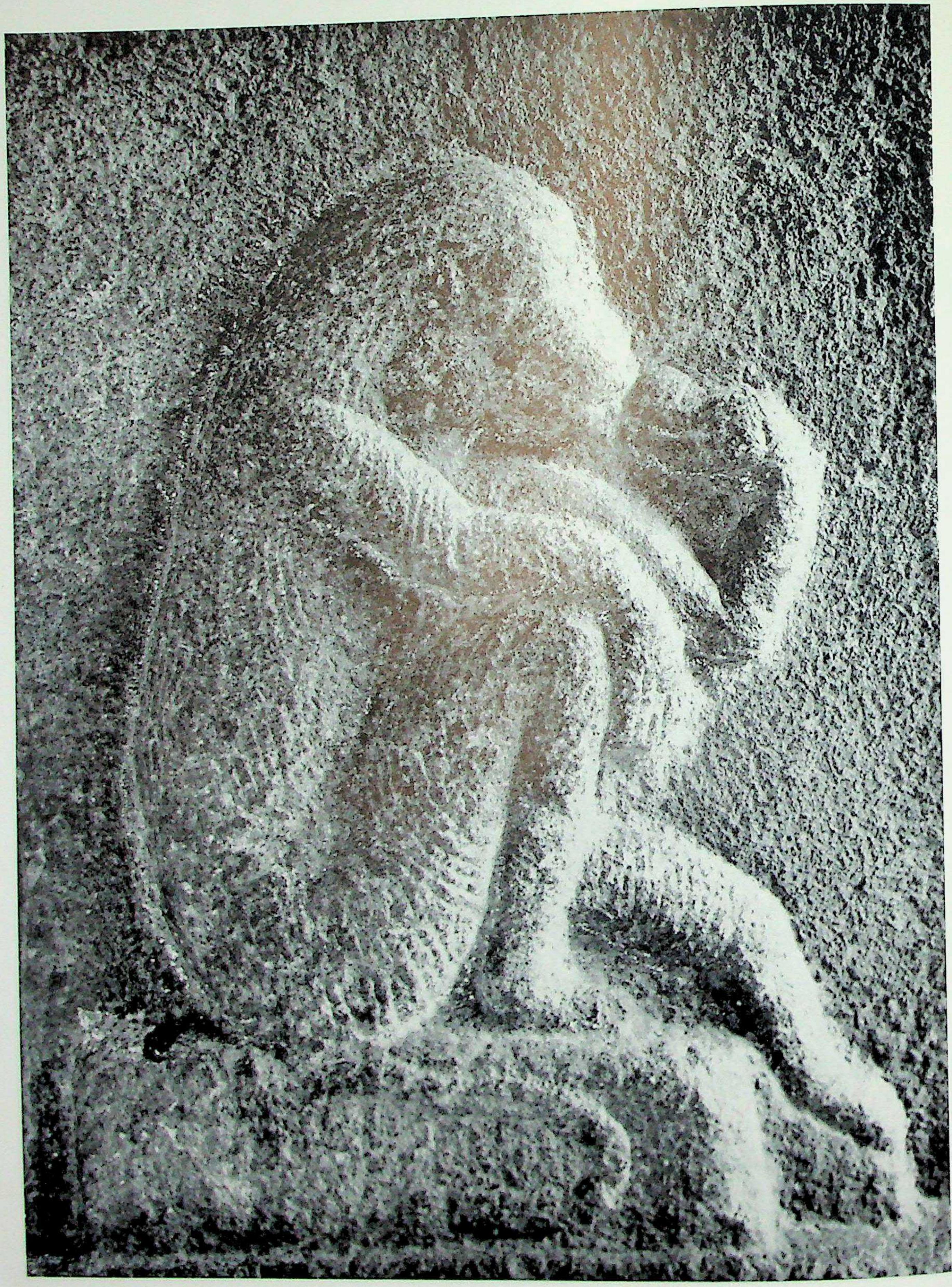
Pl. XXXIV. RAMBHA: IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



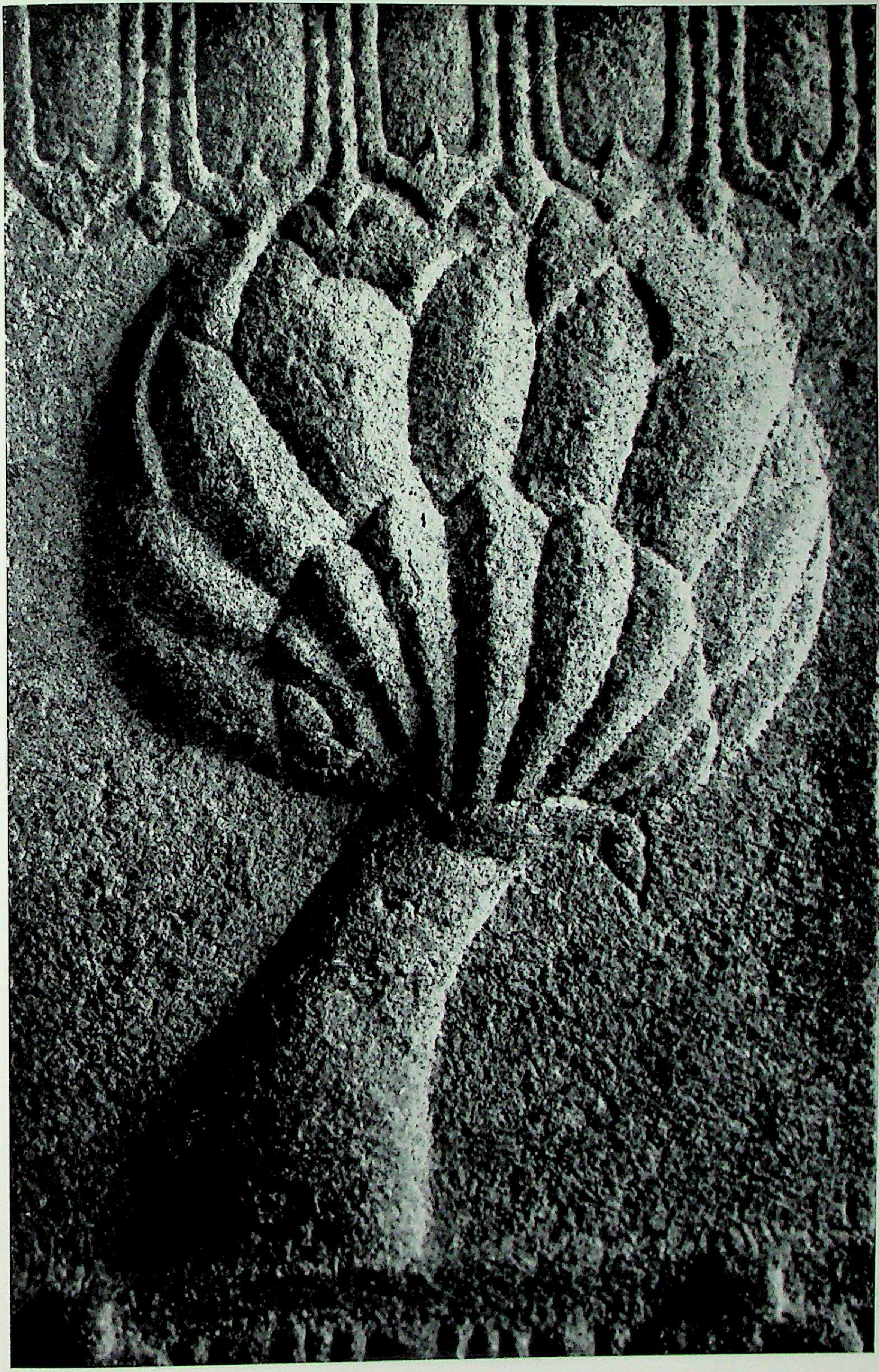
Pl. XXXV. AN ELEPHANT: ON THE PARAPET WALL: EAST OF THE RANGA MANTAPA



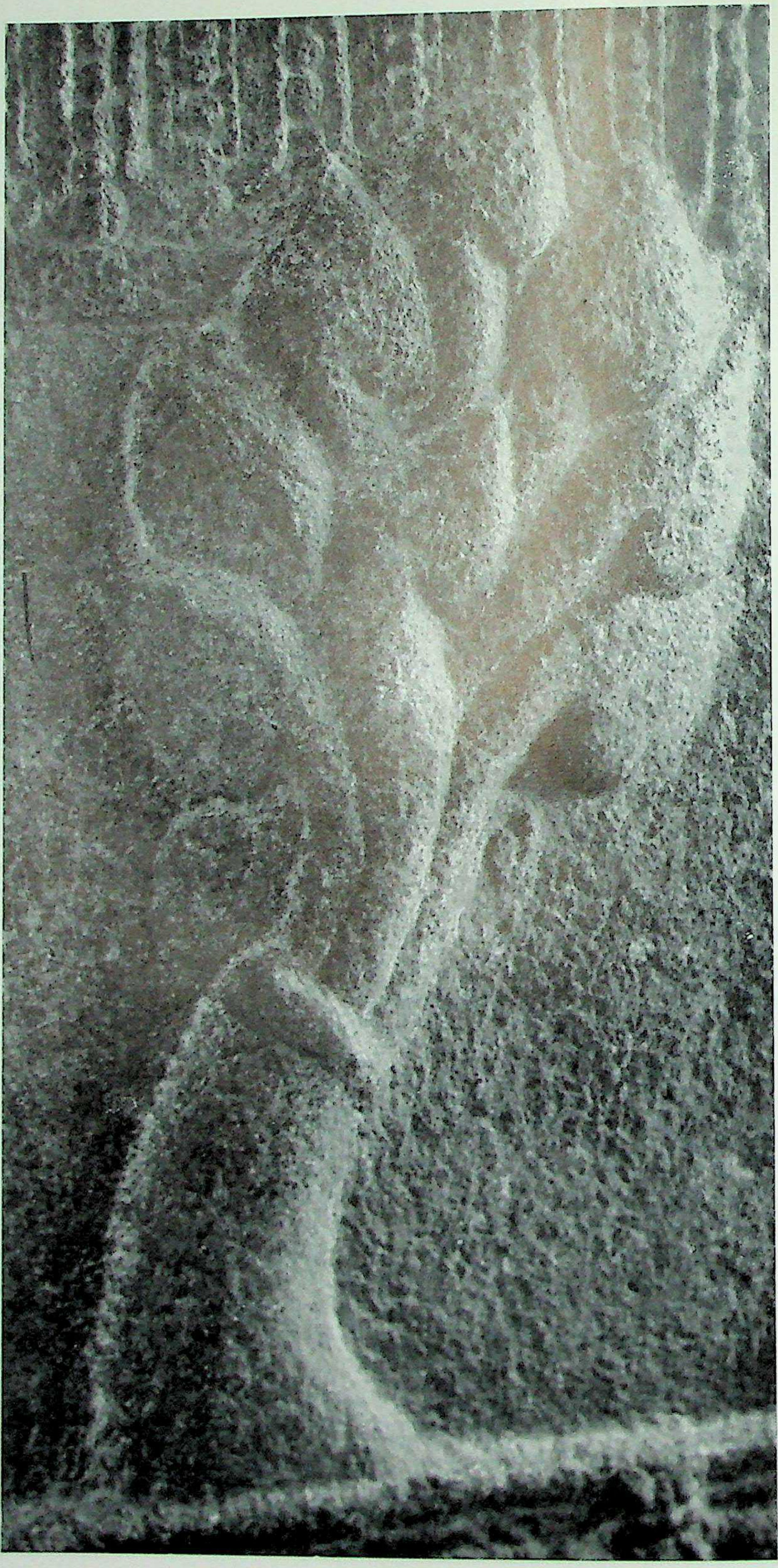
Pl. XXXVI. A STYLISED FORM OF YOGA NARASIMHA: ON A PILLAR IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



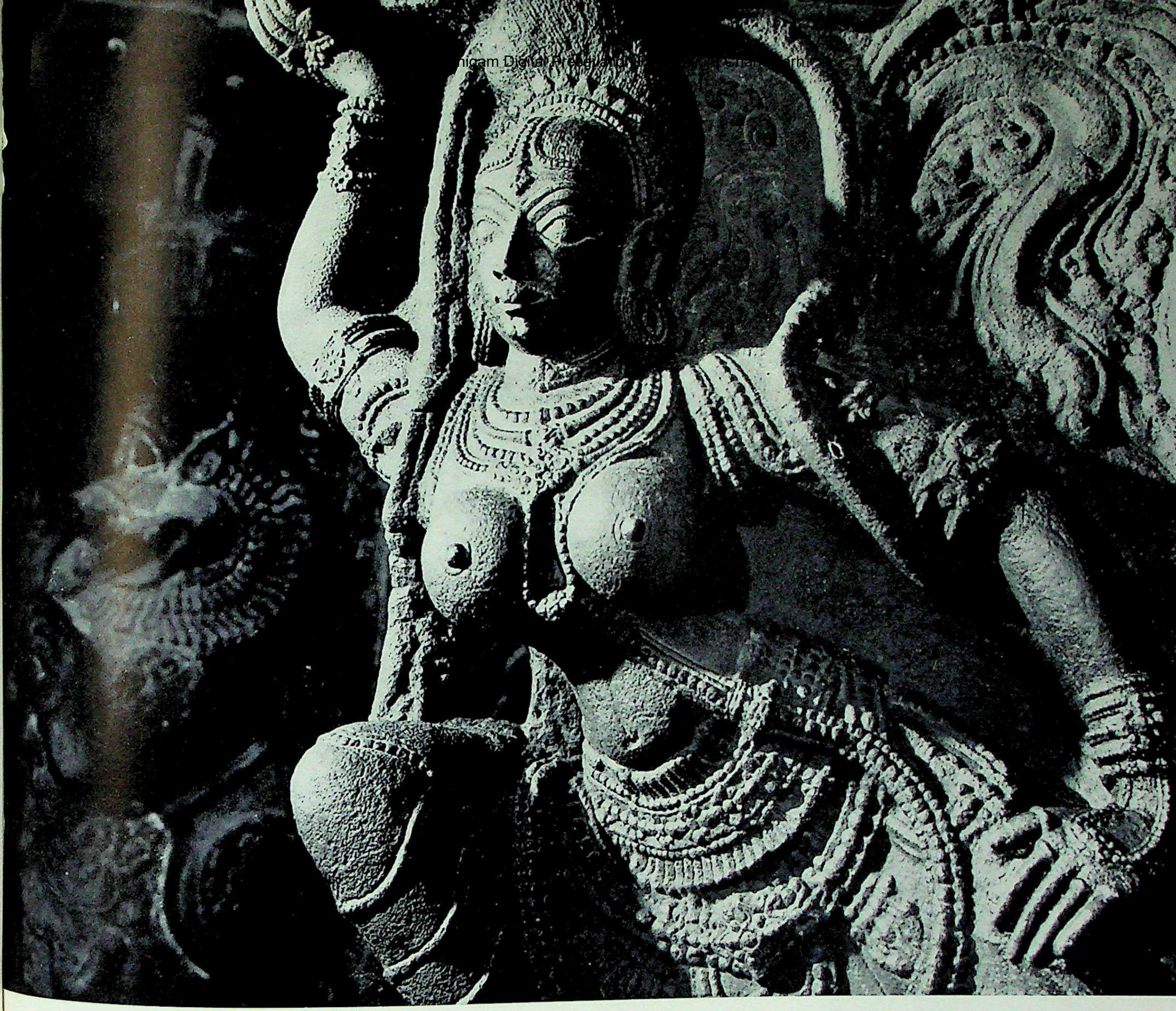
PL. XXXVII. A MONKEY EATING A FRUIT : ON A PILLAR IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



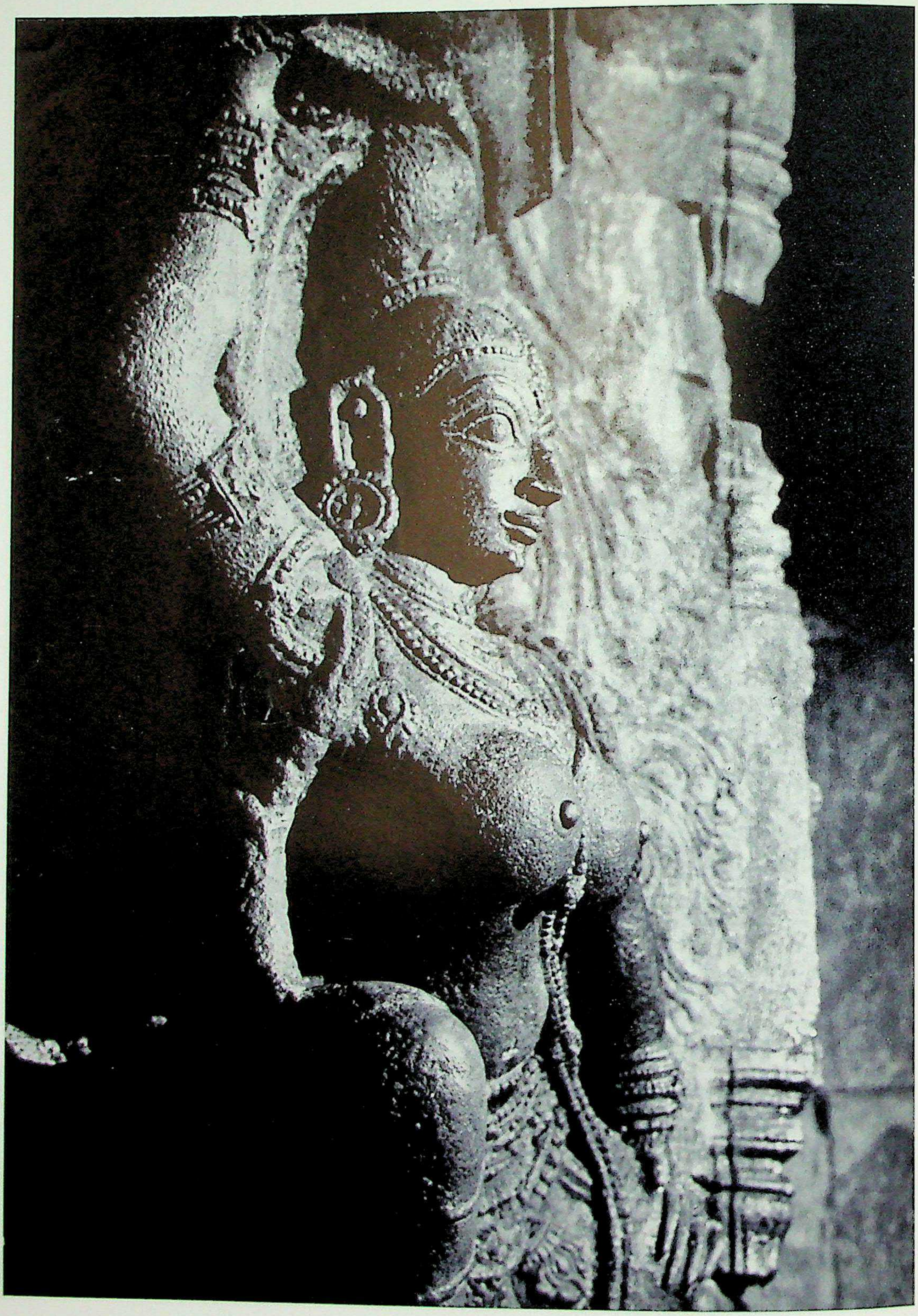
Pl. XXXVIII. THE STYLISED FORM OF A TREE: ON A PILLAR IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



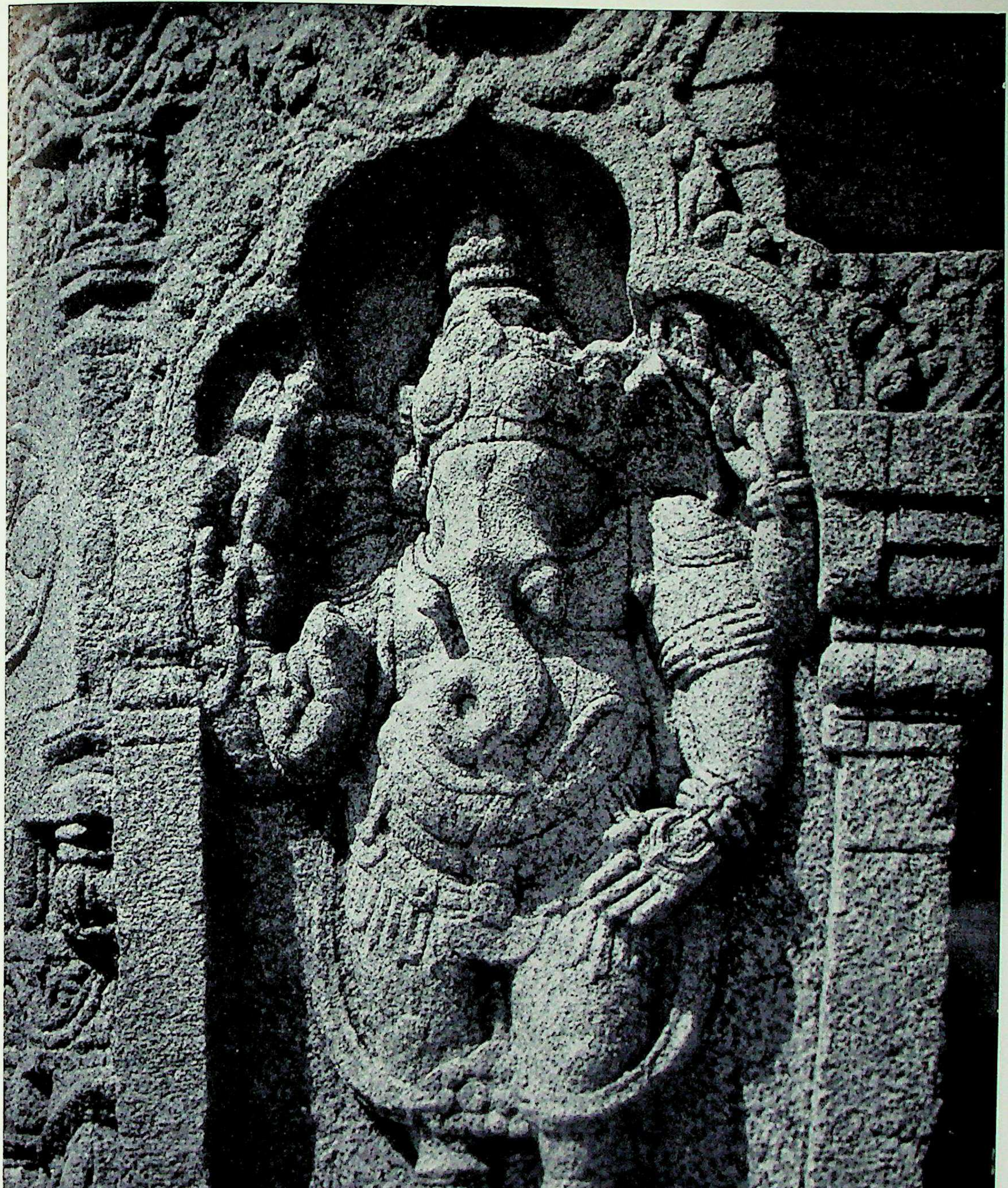
Pl. XXXIX. A STYLISED FORM OF A PIPUL TREE : ON A PILLAR IN THE RANGA MANTAPA



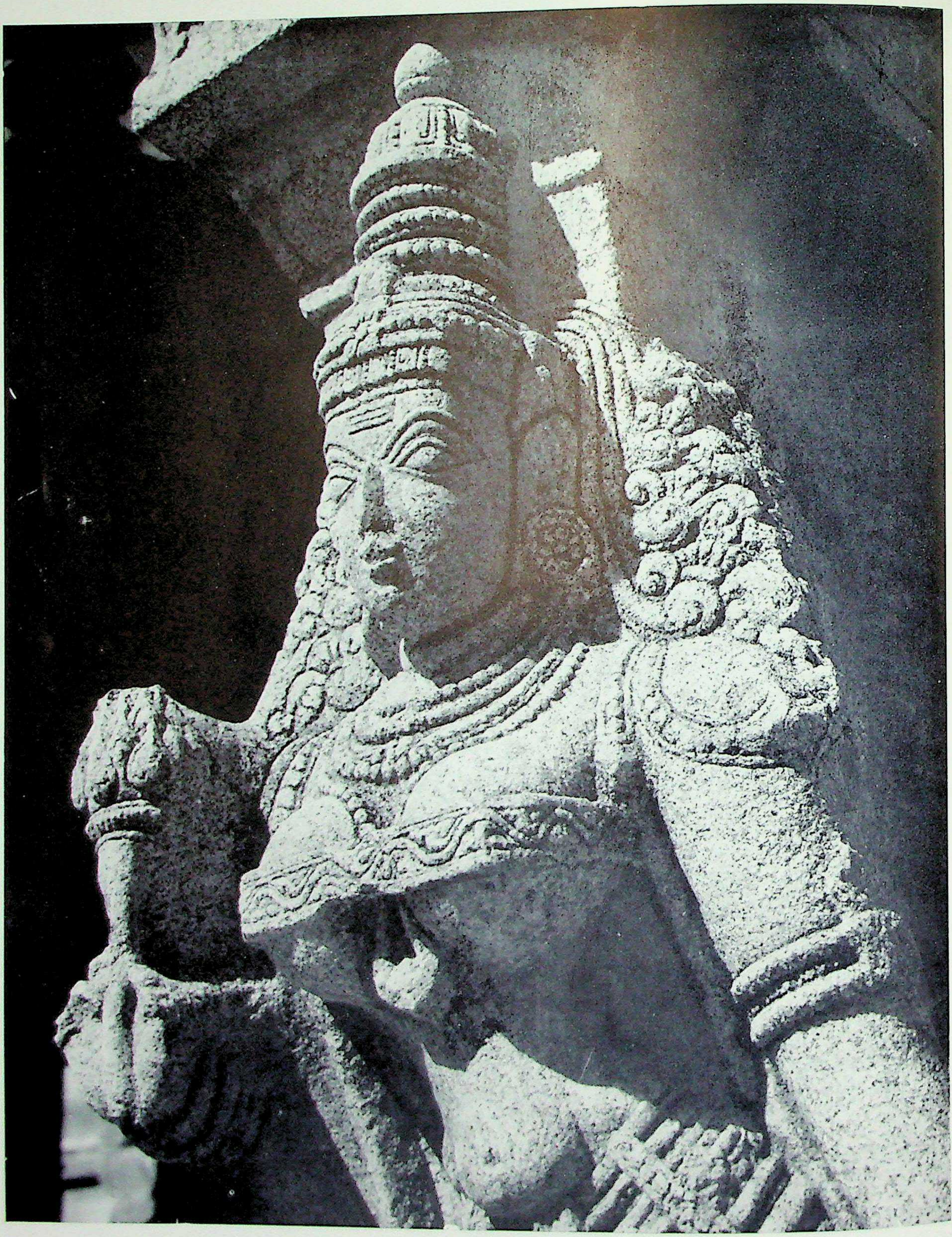
Pl. XL. PADMINI JATI STREE (FRONT VIEW): IN THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE



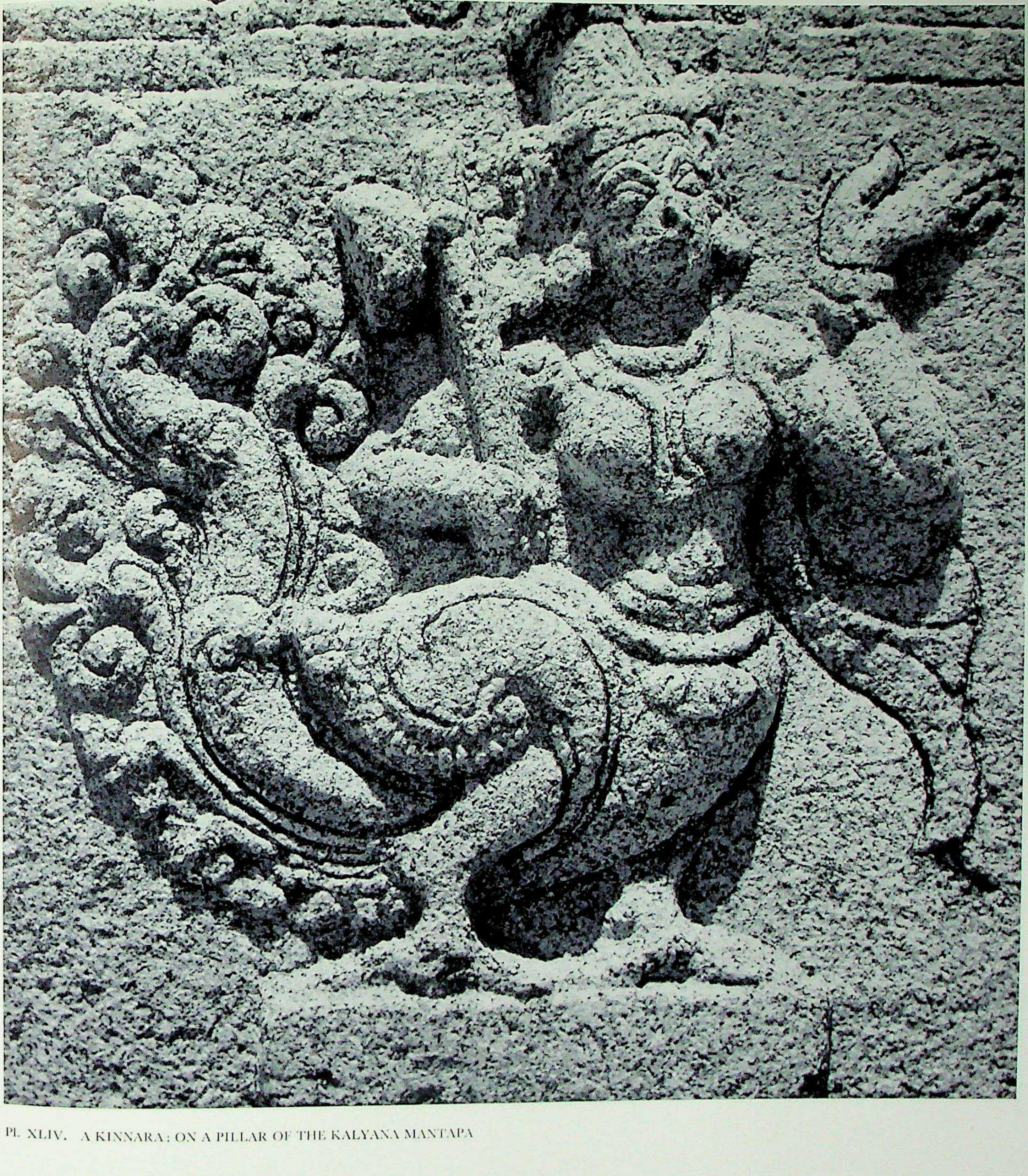
PL. XLI. SIDE VIEW OF PADMINI JATI STREE



Pl. XLII. GANESA: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



Pl. XLIII. PARVATI : ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



Pl. XLIV. A KINNARA: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA

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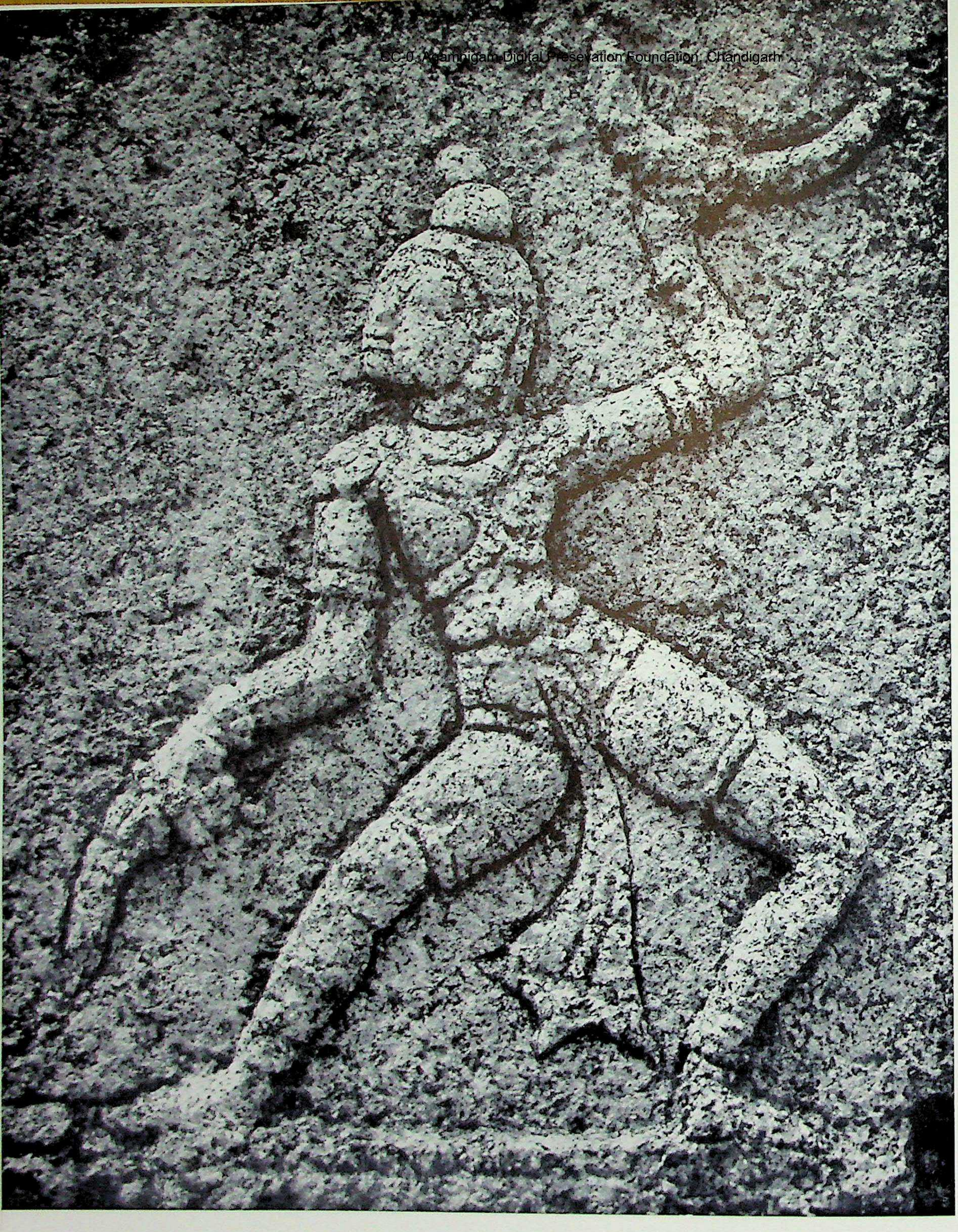
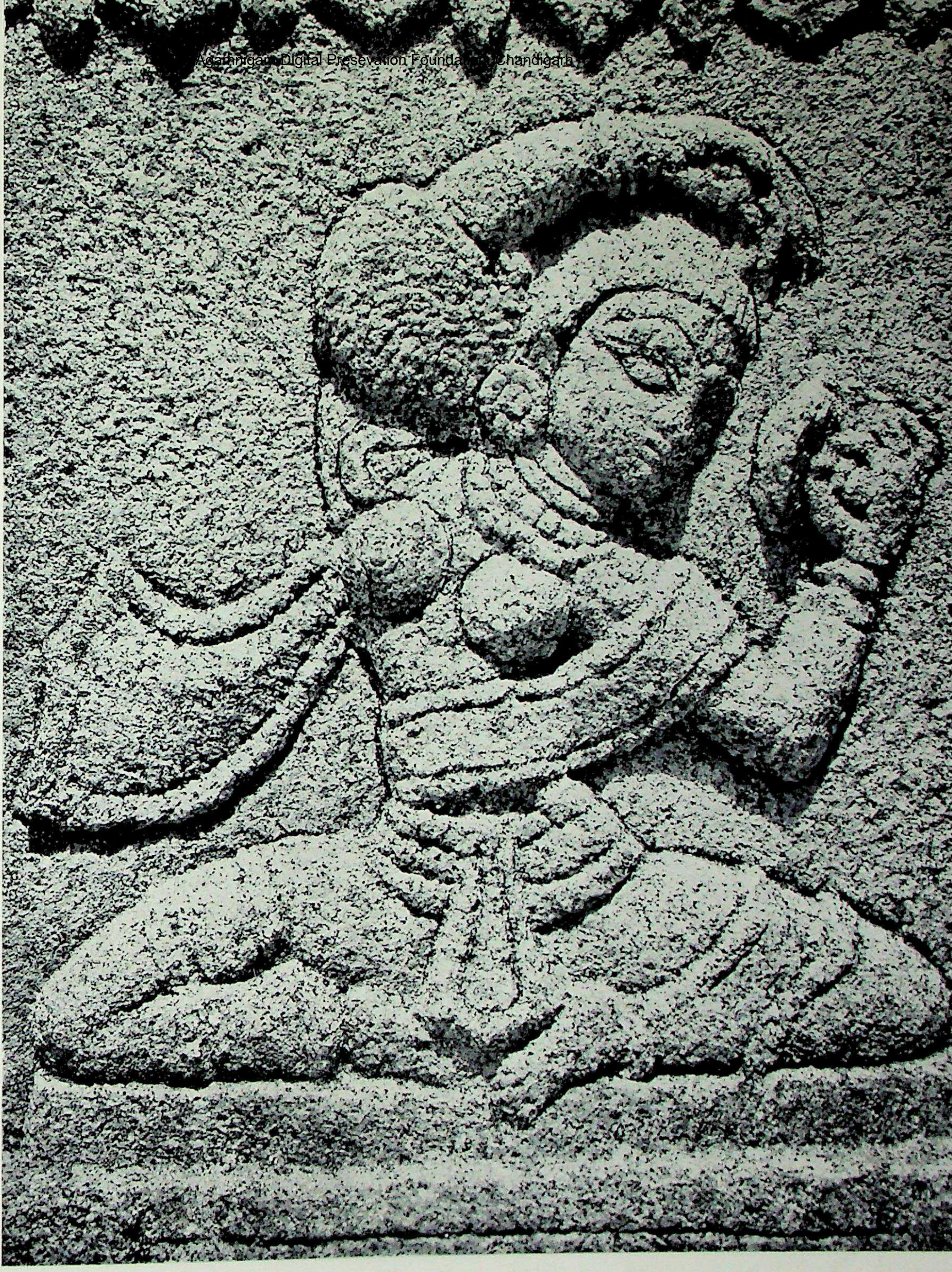
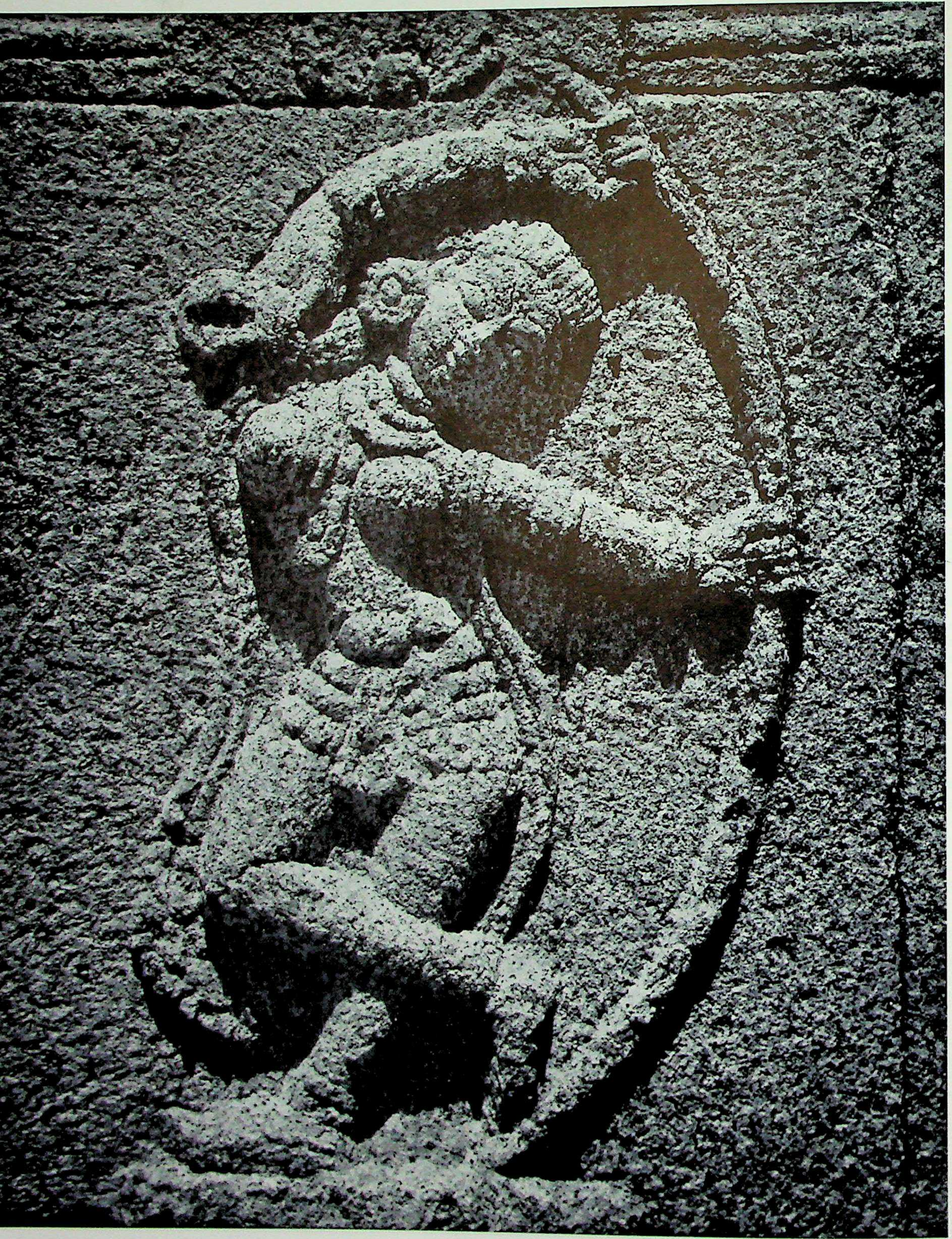


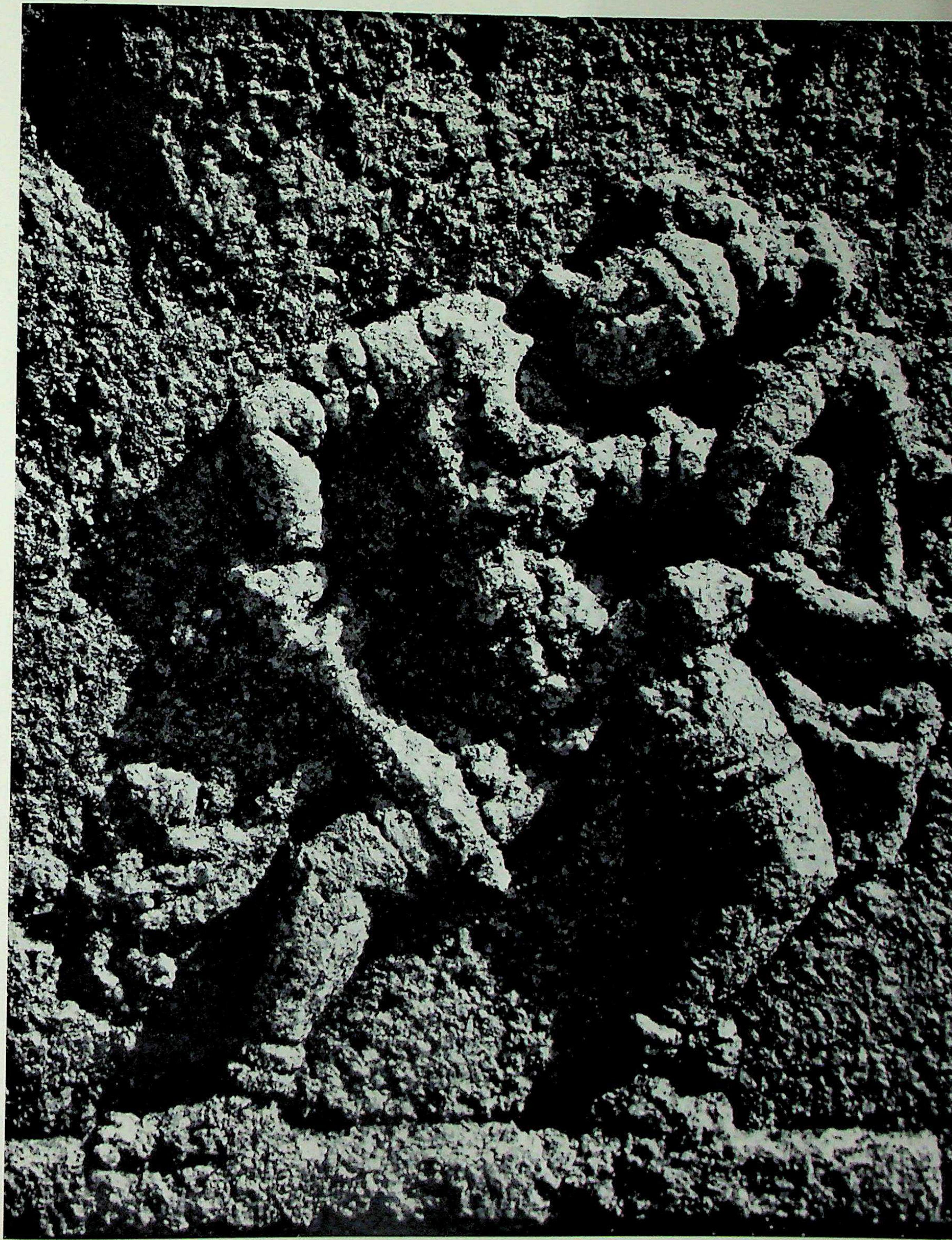
Pl. XLV. A WARRIOR: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



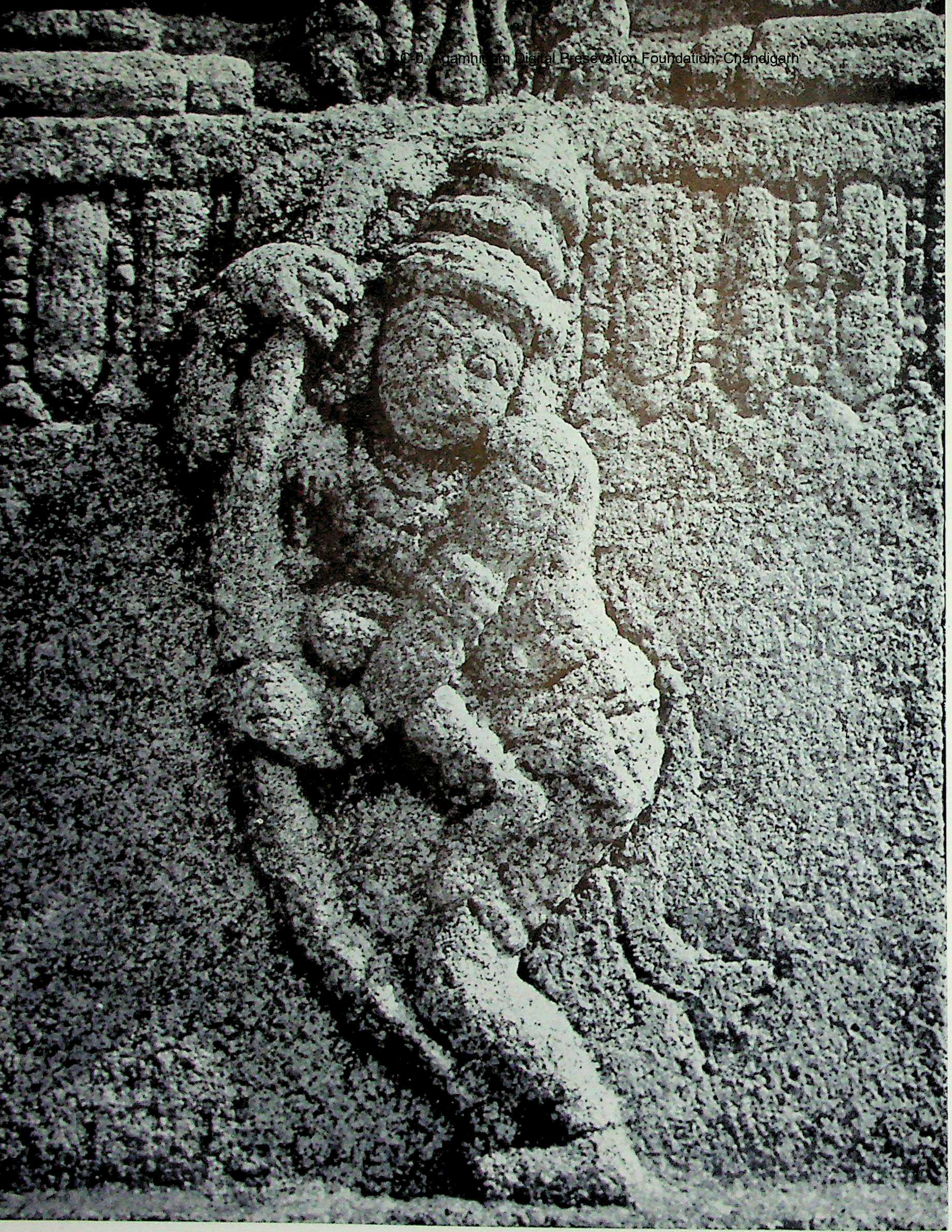
Pl. XLVI. TOILET: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



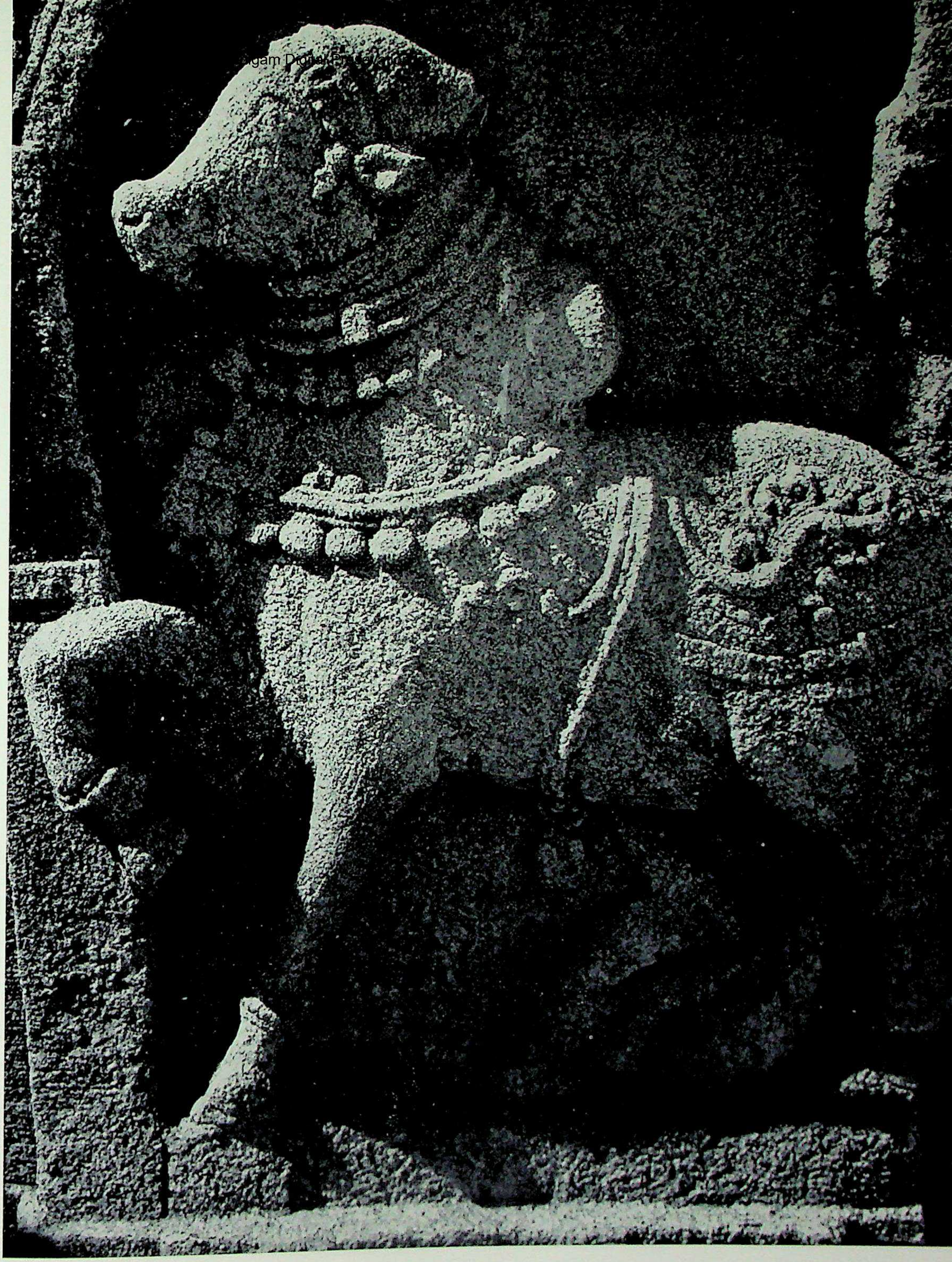
Pl. XLVII. A LADY STRINGING A BOW: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



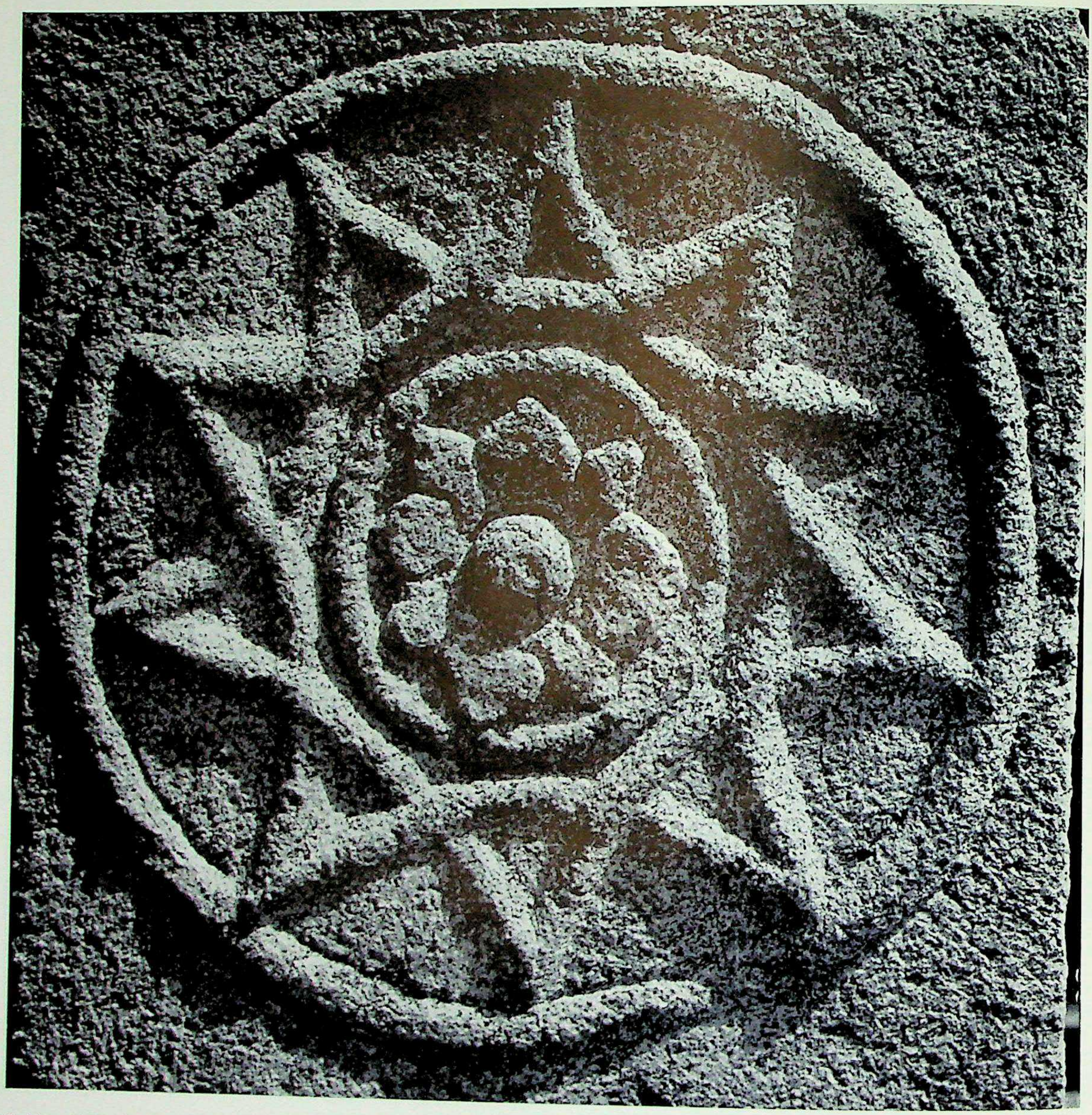
Pl. XLVIII. A WARRIOR: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



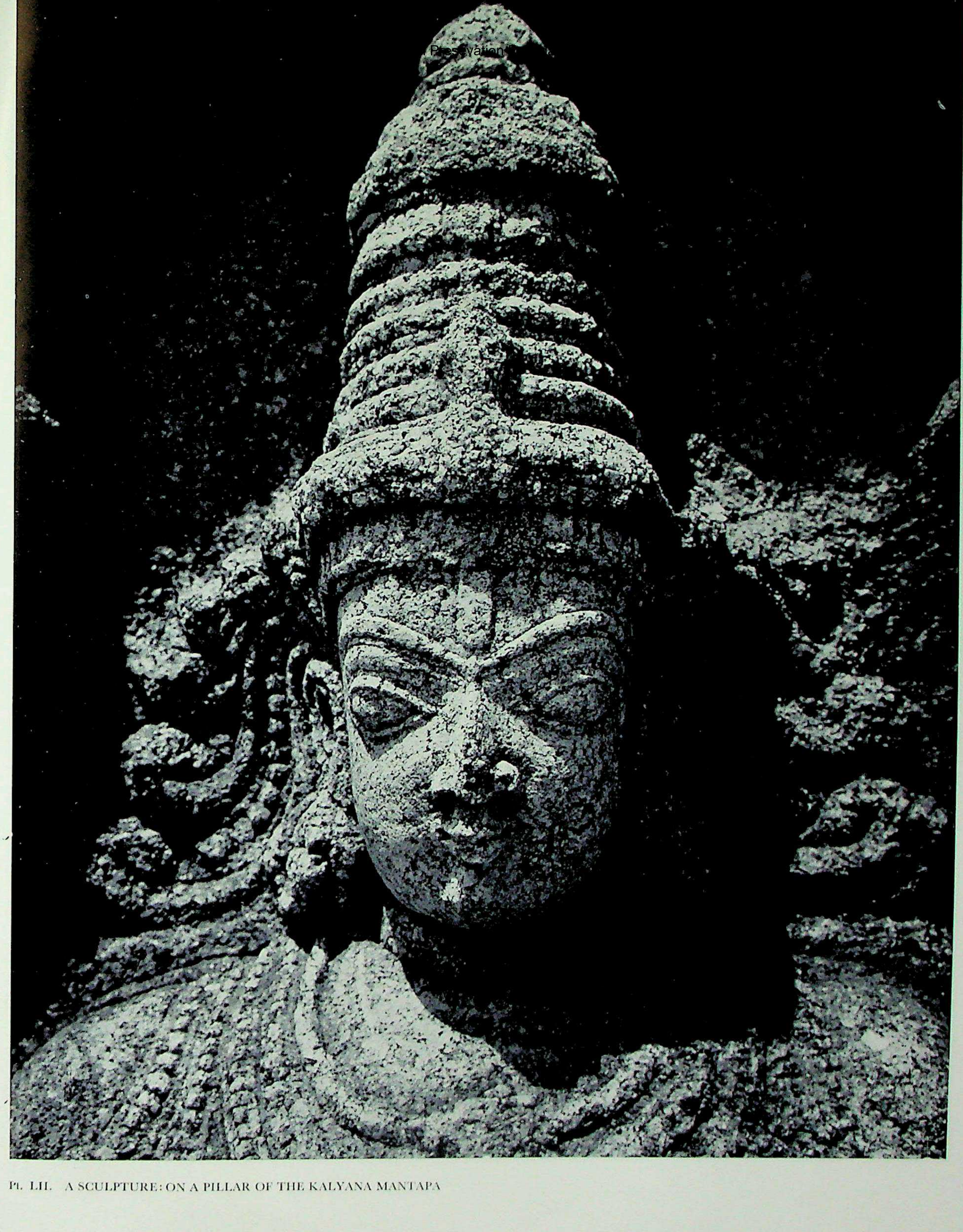
Pl. XLIX. A WARRIOR STRINGING THE BOW: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



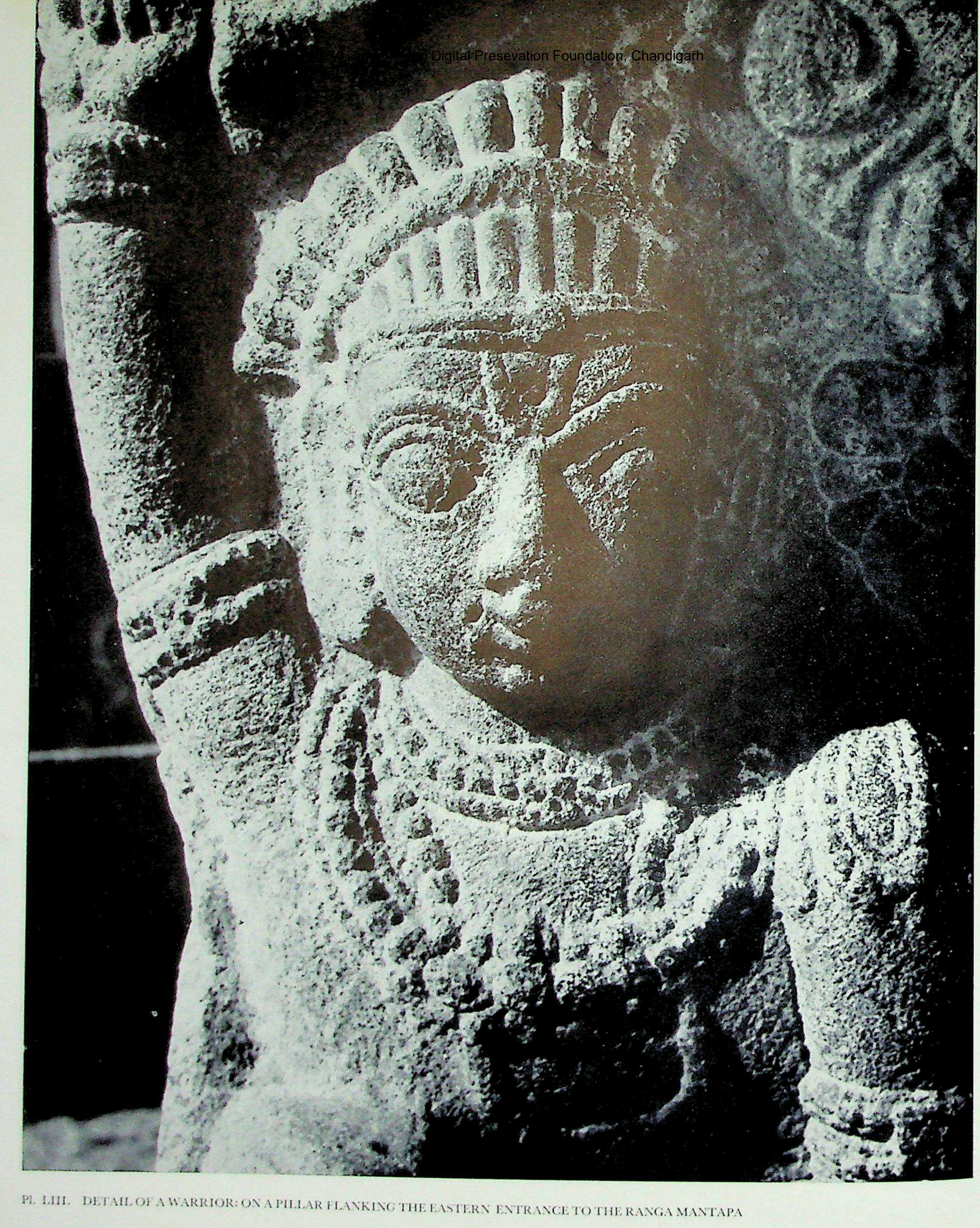
Pl. L. A BULL: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



Pl. LI. A DIAGRAM: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



Pl. LII. A SCULPTURE: ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



Pl. LIII. DETAIL OF A WARRIOR: ON A PILLAR FLANKING THE EASTERN ENTRANCE TO THE RANGA MANTAPA

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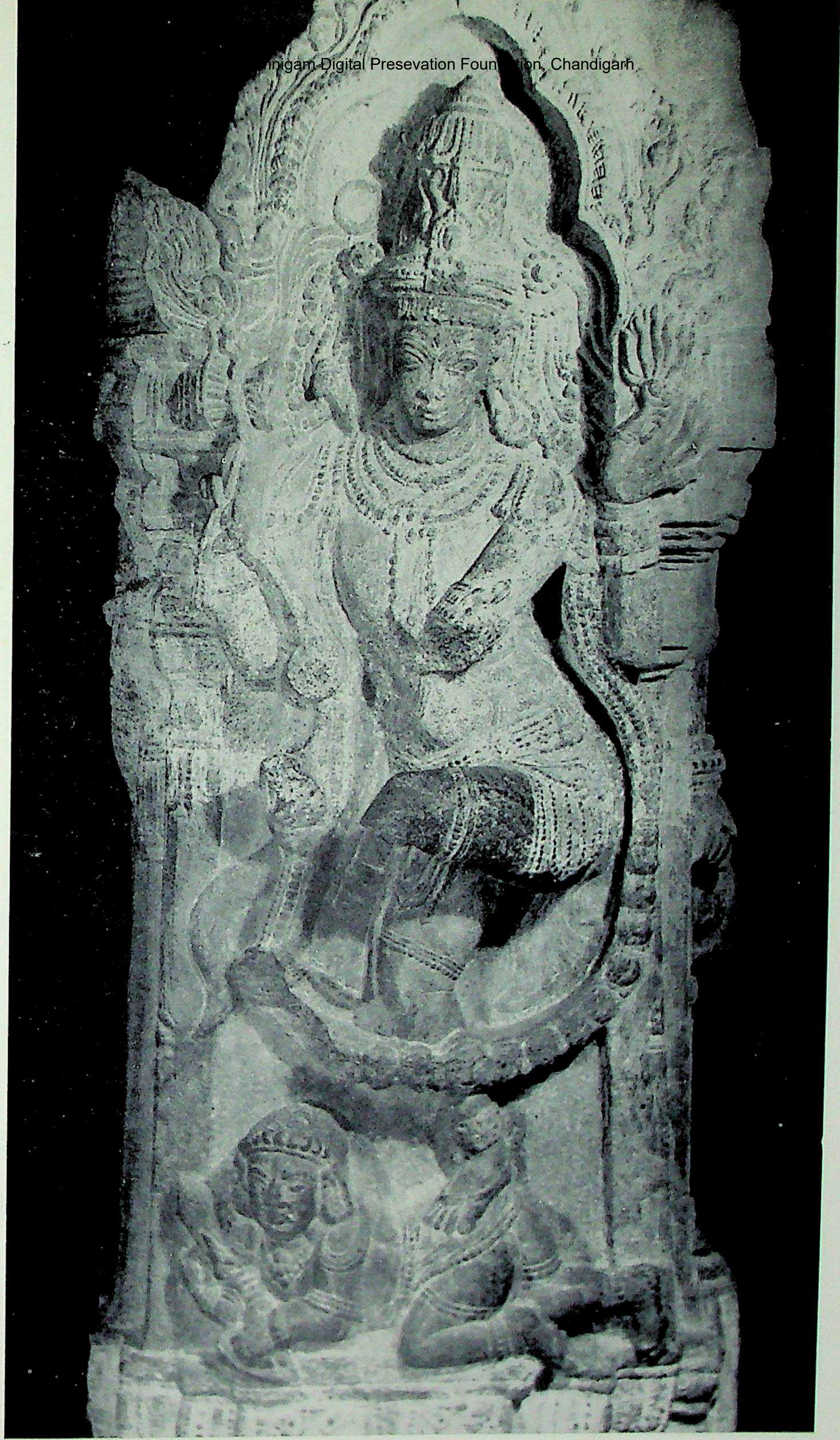

Pl. LIV. NATARAJA: ON A PILLAR OF THE RANGA MANTAPA

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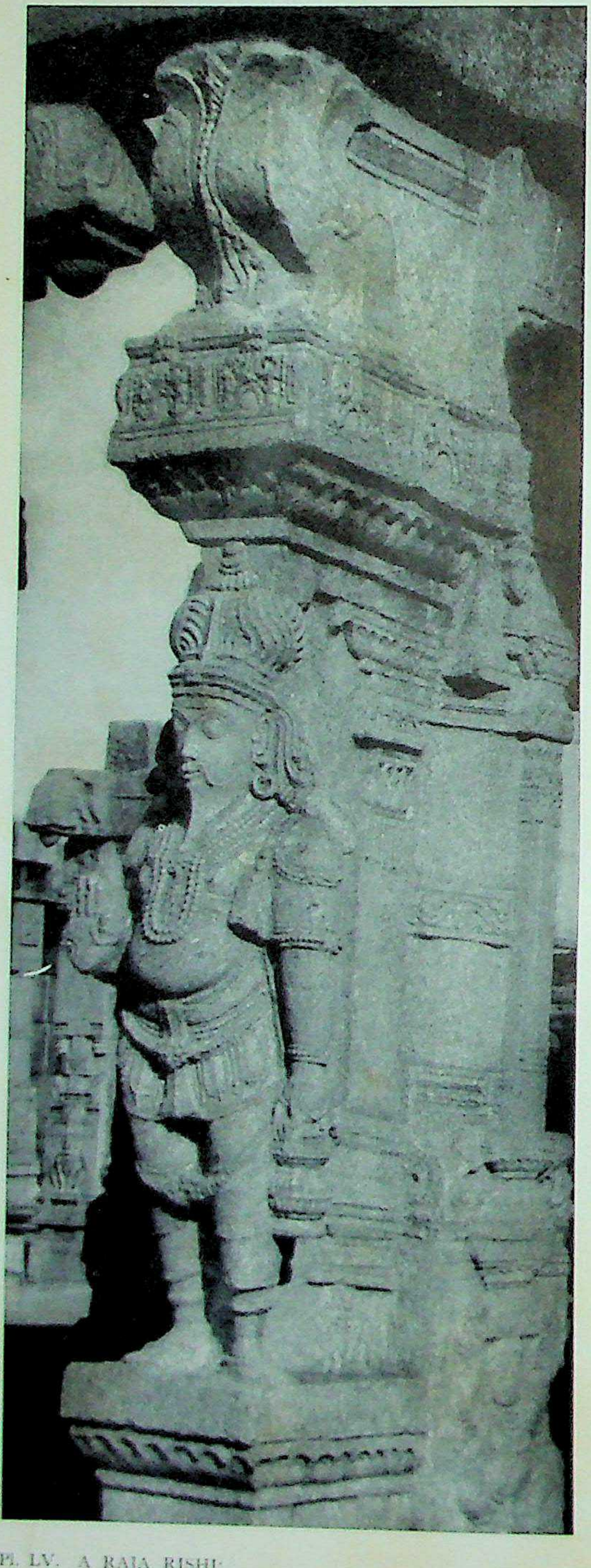
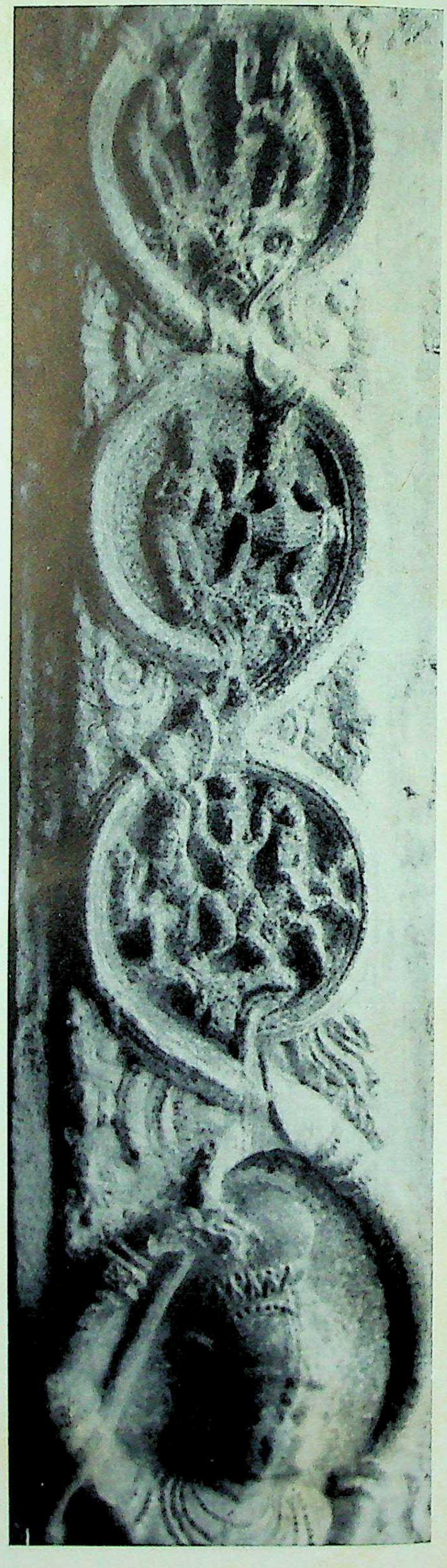


Pl. LV. A RAJA RISHI ON A PILLAR OF THE KALYANA MANTAPA



Pl. LVI. CARVING ON THE JAMB OF THE YAMUNA GATEWAY